

# **Contemporary models of curatorial and institutional praxis: a study of the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT)**

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by

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# Abstract

## Contemporary models of curatorial and institutional praxis: a study of the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT)

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This thesis describes and examines curatorial approaches and models of institutional practice which have emerged as a response to transformations in contemporary art, particularly as engendered by new media art and socially engaged practices, as well as wider changes regarding the role and functioning of culture in contemporary society. Focusing on institutional and curatorial praxis at the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) in Liverpool – the first purpose built gallery for presenting new media art in the UK – this study examines practicalities and challenges of new institutional and curatorial formats in the context of critical debates about the role and shape of art institutions, new models of artistic and curatorial practice, as well as wider socio-political and economic aspects of cultural management.

The thesis is a result of collaborative research conducted at FACT, which included an intense period of practical involvement in FACT's operations through the co-curating of *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition, which celebrated the 10th anniversary of the FACT building. Combining different methodological tools including curatorial practice, participant observation, interviews and case studies, this research gives behind the scenes insight into FACT's programming, particularly the modes of production and curatorial practice. It demonstrates how curatorial and production approaches develop within a particular institutional framework and how this institutional framework, in turn, influences the practice of curators. The research examines both advantages and limitations of particular institutional and curatorial models of working while providing insight into different factors shaping institutional agendas as well as complexities and contingencies of cultural production and management.

The analysis of FACT's curatorial practice described and examined different approaches with the most distinct ones being context-responsive, durational and collaborative curatorial ways of working. With regard to institutional practice, the findings indicate that FACT shares many similarities with institutional models developed within new media centers and the models of art institutions proposed by new institutionalism. The analysis indicates that those curatorial and institutional models and ways of working – although not without their challenges – provide suitable frameworks for supporting a wide range of artistic practices, emerging from socially engaged and new media art.

The study also concludes that those models of working, as examined in the context of FACT, imply a shift in the role of the curator to that of the producer, with particular emphasis on delivery tasks and production of *content* rather than *context*. Findings also suggest that economic aspects will play a significant role in defining the future shape of art institutions, which will need to develop strategies towards sustainable business models including flexible employment structures and project-based models of working. These come with a danger of the institution being too delivery focused and losing sight of its role as a knowledge producer. The flexible and cost effective employment structure may also lead to the dissipation of the institutional knowledge base while contributing to the already precarious labour conditions in the arts.



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# Introduction





## General Introduction

The contemporary culture is marked by an unprecedented growth in the number of art institutions existing around the globe. This 'museum phenomenon'<sup>1</sup> and the general expansion of the culture industry have brought focus to bear on art institutions as sites of exchange and debate where wider cultural, social and political processes intersect.<sup>2</sup> Increasingly, art venues are also becoming a part of the economic strategies which cities and regions employ to drive economic renewal and regeneration.<sup>3</sup> Art institutions fulfill various roles: combining research, education, documenting, archiving, collecting and presenting a range of cultural practices while trying to reach and engage wider audiences in a meaningful and accessible way. They have varying mandates and goals, as well as different demands and targets set by funders, and they respond to expectations from their public, art professionals and local creative communities.

Despite the extraordinary expansion of art institutions, which testifies to an increasing recognition of the significance of art institutions not only as cultural venues but also important tools for socio-political and economic reform, the discourse on art institutions has been accompanied by the notion of 'crisis': 'crisis of funding, crisis of audience, crisis of meaning, crisis of political legitimacy',<sup>4</sup> to name a few. Recent years have seen large cuts in arts funding both in UK and much of the developed world, causing a renewed urgency in the discussion about the role and the future of museums and galleries. Every aspect of institutional operations: the values and assumptions regarding the role of art institutions within society, the nature of their operations, and the relationship with the public have been closely scrutinised.<sup>5</sup>

However, given the complexity of relations, expectations and pressures that art institutions negotiate, the study of art institutions is a daunting task, and despite significant critical attention there are still many open questions regarding art institutions and their operations: How do art institutions structure the way they operate and what factors shape their institutional frameworks and models of working? How do they set their priorities, formulate programming and curate artistic practices? How is the meaning of those practices structured, negotiated and mediated to the public?

This research project seeks to answer some of those questions by examining curatorial and institutional practice of the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) in Liverpool. FACT is a new media centre that combines a focus on the presentation of artistic practices emerging from experiments with new technologies with a strong emphasis on audience and community engagement. FACT evolved from an art agency, Merseyside Moviola, which was established in 1985. Moviola run Video Positive, an artist film and video festival and has commissioned a wide range of projects across

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1 See Fyfe, G. 2011. 'Sociology and the Social Aspects of Museums.' In S. Macdonald (ed.) 2011. *A Companion to Museum Studies*. 2nd ed. Maiden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. pp. 33-50.

2 See Macdonald, S. 2011. 'Expanding Museum Studies: An Introduction.' In Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*. p. 1.

3 See for example Yudice, G. 2003. *The Expediency of Culture. Uses of Culture in the Global Era*. Durham and London: Duke University Press; Belfiore, E. 2002. 'Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK.' *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 8:1. pp. 91-106.

4 Sheik, S. 2006. 'The Trouble with Institutions, or Art and Its Publics.' In N. Montman (ed). 2006. *Art and Its Institutions. Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations*. London: Black Dog Publishing. p. 142.

5 See for example Montman, N (ed.) 2006. *Art and Its Institutions. Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations*. London: Black Dog Publishing; Marstine, J. (ed.) 2006. *New Museum: Theory and Practice: An Introduction*. Oxford: Willey; Karp, I. at al. 2006. *Museum Frictions. Public Cultures/Global Transformations*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

the city, often in collaboration with communities. In 1999 Moviola changed its name to Foundation for Art and Creative Technology and embarked on a building project to create a purpose-built space in Liverpool. The FACT building – housing galleries, cinema and production facilities – opened in 2003, expanding the institution's capacity for incubating and presenting a wide range of artistic practices.

Committed to supporting artistic experiments at the intersection of art design and technology while seeking to respond to its local context and embed its practice in the city, FACT is an interesting case study to investigate models of institutional and curatorial practices, especially those, which try to facilitate a range of socially engaged and new media art. Focusing on current and recent projects that FACT has commissioned and presented within three main areas of its programming, Exhibitions, Collaboration and Engagement and Abandon Normal Devices festival, this research describes and examines different curatorial approaches and production models with respect to both their objectives and to the practicalities of how the curatorial and production strategies are used to support and distribute artistic practices FACT seeks to present. Examining models of working at FACT also reveals wider institutional strategies and provides an insight into different factors shaping institutional agendas and how, in turn, this institutional context influences and shapes the practice of curators and producers.

This research examines FACT's institutional and curatorial strategies in the context of ongoing debates surrounding art institutions and curating. Discussed in the contextual review are the processes of transformation of contemporary art institutions and shifts in curatorial practice, particularly those, which have emerged as a response to the demands of new media and socially engaged art. The analysis draws upon debates around the transformations in contemporary art brought about by the return of socially engaged practices as well as by new media art, but does not set out to feed back into these debates as there exists already a fast growing body of literature addressing these issues.<sup>6</sup> Rather, it is taken as a given that both new media art and socially engaged art have changed the landscape of contemporary art and have forced curators and institutions to rethink their models of practice. The research directly addresses the question of how institutions, and curators within institutions, have practically adapted to these changes, with FACT as the specific case study.

This thesis is a result of research which was conducted as part of a Collaborative Doctoral Award programme between the Centre for Architecture and Visual Arts (CAVA) at the University of Liverpool and FACT, which was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK. The programme includes a series of three PhD projects which were set up to examine – focusing on past, present and future – the role of FACT in the development of new media art in the UK. This project is second in the series, and it focuses on current practice of FACT. The collaborative aspect of this project involved a substantial element of practical engagement at FACT, allowing a deeper understanding of FACT's operations and the factors, which shape them. The research provides a first hand account of

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6 For the discussion on transformation of contemporary art See a) for socially engaged art: Bourriaud, N. 2002. *Relational Aesthetics*. Paris: Les Presse du Reel; Kester, G. 2004. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Contemporary Art*. Berkeley, Calif; London: University of California Press; Lacy, S. 1994. *Mapping the Terrain. New Genre Public Art*. Seattle, Wash: Bay Press; Bishop, C. (ed.) 2007. *Participation*. London: Whitechapel Art Gallery. b) for new media: Rush, M. 2005. *New Media in Art*. 2nd ed. London: Thames & Hudson; Manovich, L. 2001. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press; Paul, C. 2003. *Digital Art*. London: Thames & Hudson; Grau, O. 2002. *Virtual Art: from Illusion to Immersion*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. Grau, O. (ed.) 2007. *Media Art Histories*. Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press. Stallbrass, J. 2003. *Internet Art: the Online Clash of Culture and Commerce*. London: Tate Publishing; Gere, C. 2006. *Art, Time and Technology*. Oxford: Bloomsbury Publishing; Gere, C. 2002. *Digital Culture*. London: Reaktion Books.

the programming and production processes at FACT, highlighting the complexities of curating and presenting new artistic practice within a particular institutional format as well as complexities and contingencies of cultural production and management.

Focusing on FACT's present operations, the timeframe of this study covers a relatively short period in FACT's nearly 30 year history (which was very comprehensively researched by Jane Clayton in the first doctoral thesis to come out of this series of collaborative projects at FACT).<sup>7</sup> As such, the thesis offers only a partial view on FACT's curatorial and institutional praxis. However, it is a crucial moment for the institution that this research examines. The study begins in 2009, when FACT launched the Abandon Normal Devices (AND) festival and ends in 2013, when FACT celebrated 10th anniversary of its building with a series of events including the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition. Those two events have a particular significance for both FACT's current operations as well as for this research project.

Launching the AND festival was an attempt by FACT to expand its activities and presentation format, but it was also a significant artistic and organisational risk which – as this research established – has changed the organisational structure at the core of the institution. Celebrating 10th anniversary of the building – which *Turning FACT Inside Out* was a central part of – became for FACT the catalyst for a process of institutional self-reflection in which FACT, looking at the past decade of its operations, was considering its future shape and what it needed in order to remain relevant going forward. Those two moments mark a period of intense transformation of FACT's operations, providing a rich ground for the study of its institutional and curatorial practice.

The timeframe of this also study coincides with my practical involvement in FACT's activities. In 2009 – prior to taking up the position of a collaborative doctoral researcher – I worked as an external curator on a large public art project (*War Veteran Vehicle* by Krzysztof Wodiczko), which was presented at the inaugural edition of AND in September 2009. I also worked as a co-curator, alongside Mike Stubbs, FACT's CEO, on the development and production of the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition, which was at the core of my collaborative research at FACT. Being involved in both the initial AND festival and in the making of FACT's anniversary exhibition meant that I was at the very center of a significant institutional self-reflection and transformation, able to closely observe and understand the changes that FACT went through as a result.

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7 Clayton, J. 2012. *The Art of Regeneration: the Establishment and Development of the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology, 1985-2010*. PhD thesis. Liverpool: University of Liverpool.

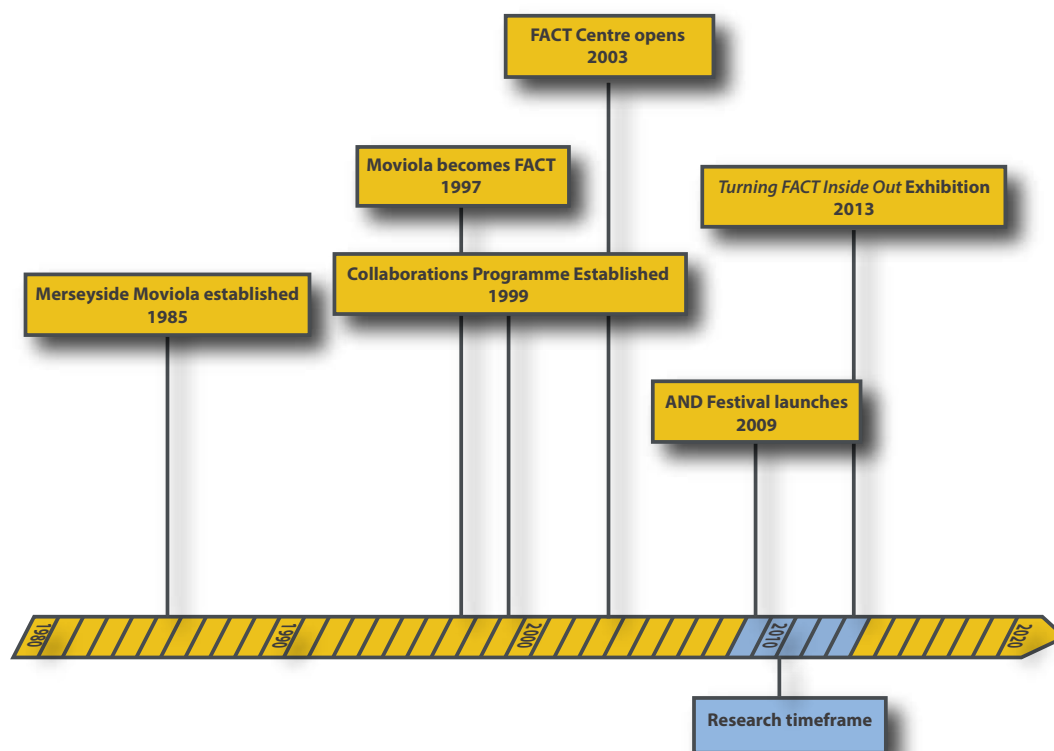


Fig 1 Timeline presenting key moments in FACT's history and the timeframe of this research project.

## Research questions

The primary and overarching research question of this study is

*How has FACT sought to curate and present art practices it was set up to promote?*

This has been investigated by means of a series of secondary questions:

- 1) *What kind of institutional and curatorial strategies has FACT developed?*
- 2) *How successful were the approaches FACT developed in supporting the practices it was set up to promote?*

The main research question outlines, more broadly, the nature and focus of this study as an investigation of the ways in which FACT has selected, developed, researched (all implicated in *curation*) and presented artistic practices as well as how it understood its mission (what were *the practices it was set up to promote*). The secondary question further sharpens the focus of the study by pointing specifically to institutional and curatorial strategies as central to this examination. Both those questions are of *descriptive* nature,<sup>8</sup> implicating that the research aims to explore and *describe* the different strategies, approaches and ways of working (the *what*) as well as as the ways in which (the *how*) FACT deployed those strategies to present the practices it was set up to promote.

<sup>8</sup> For typology of research questions See Agee, J. 2009. 'Developing Qualitative Research Questions: a Reflective Process.' *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. 22: 4. Available through University of Liverpool Library website: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/library/>. Accessed: June 27, 2014. pp. 431-447.

The last question indicates that this research also seeks to evaluate the approaches and strategies described at FACT. The criteria for evaluating the success of FACT's models of working, adopted for the purpose of this study, are of *pragmatic* nature, which considers how *effective* were FACT's strategies in supporting (i.e. developing, producing, and presenting) artistic practices FACT wanted to promote. The research does not seek to debate the *aesthetic* aspects of those practices and discuss whether FACT's strategies resulted in *artistically* most successful or valuable work.

The strong focus on practice and the pragmatic aspects of FACT's institutional and curatorial strategies, which these research questions indicate, is what makes this examination a relevant contribution to the study of art institutions and curating. As has often been pointed out, studies of museums and art institutions are often conducted in separation from examination of their actual practice; they are written from an outside perspective, analysing the finished outcomes – exhibitions and projects – without an insight into how projects come into being: what factors influence curatorial decisions and shape the projects as well as how meaning of those projects is constructed, negotiated and disseminated in the process.<sup>9</sup> The curatorial discourse, on another hand, is largely driven by curators themselves discussing their own practice, and it is often declaratory – focusing on aims and intentions rather than critical examination of the outcomes and the processes through which projects are realised.<sup>10</sup>

The collaborative nature of this project, which granted an unprecedented access to the institution, allowed for a close observation of FACT's practice. Studying curatorial and institutional ways of working from *within*, this research offers a rare, critical insight into the actual practice of curators and art institutions. This study also evaluates the different models of working, points out their limitations and advantages and considers pragmatic circumstances and challenges involved in cultural production. As such, findings emerging from this examination have practical implications for the work of curators and art institutions, particularly those seeking to commission, produce and present a wide range of socially engaged and new media artwork.

## Methodology

Owing to the collaborative nature of this research project, which involved substantial amount of time spent working at FACT, the methodology of this study is predominantly practice-led, but it has also borrowed tools from ethnographic study whereby an understating of an organisation is gained through immersion in its culture over extended period of time.<sup>11</sup> Methods for gathering research material involved curatorial practice, participant observation, semi-structured interviews with the FACT team, analysis of examples of projects and exhibitions including the main case study of *Turning FACT Inside Out* and examination of primary documents such as curatorial briefs and statements, project evaluations as well as FACT's policy documents.

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9 See Macdonald, S. 2002. *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum*. Oxford, New York: Berg. p. 9.; Hooper-Greenhill, E. 1992. *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London, New York: Routledge. p. 3. For the discussion of the differences between academics' and museum practitioners' perspectives See Haxthausen, C.W. (ed.) 2002. *The Two Art Histories: the Museum and the University*. Williamston, Mass: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute.

10 Commenting on the 'self asserting declarative approach' as dominating curatorial discourse See O'Neill, P. 2012. *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. p. 7.

11 See Ouroussoff, A. 2001. 'What is an Ethnographic Study?' In D. N. Geller, E. Hirsch (eds.) 2001. *Inside Organizations. Anthropologists at Work*. Oxford: Berg. pp. 35-60.

As already noted, one of the most significant aspects of the research process was my involvement as co-curator, in the development and production of *Turning FACT Inside Out* as well as working as external curator on the *War Veteran's Vehicle* project by Krzysztof Wodiczko, shown as part of Abandon Normal Devices festival. Experience of curating and co-curating projects at FACT has facilitated an in-depth insight and behind the scenes knowledge of FACT's institutional operations. Working within different contexts at FACT, i.e. curating both exhibitions in the FACT gallery as part of core programming and a participatory project presented in the public, allowed for a close understanding of different considerations, practicalities and ways of working within and outside institutional context as well as for various observational angles which have been drawn upon in the analysis.

The intense involvement at FACT has not only provided an in-depth understanding of its culture but also – perhaps more importantly – has shaped this research project. Originally conceived as predominantly theoretically driven examination of the role of FACT in facilitating new models of participation, contributing towards new concepts of public sphere, the project has shifted towards practice-led examination of FACT's curatorial and institutional praxis. The reason for the shift in the research focus and the perspective from which the analysis are formulated – from theoretically to practically informed – was an increasing realisation of the need to acknowledge the complexities and contingencies of institutional practice, which do not fit comfortably within a predominantly theory driven narrative.

The study of art institutions, as noted previously, is often conducted from outside of institutions, resulting in certain gap between the *theory* and the actual *practice* of art institutions. My own experience of collaborative research has indeed confirmed the often incommensurate relation between the theory and the practice of contemporary art production. It became clear that conducting research into the models of institutional practice and its outcomes (projects and exhibitions) and proposing theoretical analysis in separation from the research into the practice itself did not address the pragmatics of circumstance, which to a great extent shape that practice. Studying an institution based solely on its outputs does not account for the complex decisions behind them. Sharon Macdonald, who conducted an extensive ethnographic study of an exhibition production at the Science Museum in London, argues that looking behind the scenes of institutions can reveal important processes which are not visible from the perspective of an outsider looking at the end results of curatorial and institutional practice:

'What ethnography, especially one coupled with historical and political-economic analysis, can provide is a fuller account of the nature and complexities of production: of the disjunctions, disagreements and 'surprise outcomes' involved in the cultural production. It can highlight what did not survive into the finished form as well as what did, and also some of the reasons for particular angles or gaps.'<sup>12</sup>

Collaborative research over the period of this study has been conducted to the rhythm of a constant and reciprocally generative shift between practice and theory. A growing understanding of the complexities of the gallery practices and processes, which inform cultural production, allowed for theoretical reflections to be tested against enacted realities. Conversely, theoretical reflection and analysis of other institutional and curatorial practices have provided a framework for comparing and analysing the particularities of FACT's praxis.

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12 Macdonald, *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum*. p. 8.

The perspective granted by the practical involvement at FACT's programming, combined with a critical reflection on the process, although not without its problems, is what makes this research distinct from other examples of AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Awards based in museums and galleries, which can be seen to fall into three general categories: First, the collaborative students in these programmes often fulfill the roles of researchers, gathering material, undertaking archival or collection research in order to contextualise the practice of the museum or a gallery and thereby contribute to the knowledge base of a particular institution.<sup>13</sup> Second, the researchers may provide background research for a particular project, or an exhibition, which they are involved in programming, for example the *Centre of the Creative Universe* exhibition at Tate Liverpool.<sup>14</sup> However, while the author of the research in this case co-curated an exhibition at the Tate Liverpool, the research project itself and the resulting thesis was focused on the historical research which was the basis for the exhibition and did not involve critical reflection on the curatorial process. Thirdly, the role of some other PhD candidates has involved a critical analysis of museum or institutional practice, often within a participant observation framework.<sup>15</sup> As a participant observer, exhibition co-curator, whose research is presented as a contextualisation of FACT's specific institutional and curatorial practices, this study represents a new synthesis of approach.

## Research Methods

### Participant Observation

Participant observation – widely used in ethnography and cultural anthropology – involves establishing a place in a social setting on a relatively long term basis in order to gain a close understanding and an insiders perspective of particular social setting and gain access 'to phenomena that commonly are obscured from the standpoint of nonparticipant'.<sup>16</sup> It implies that the observer is part of the ongoing activities which he or she is studying. Such research involves a range of data collection methods, including participation in the life of the group, discussions, informal interviews and direct observation of the culture one is studying.<sup>17</sup>

The objective of participant observation in the context of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the day-to-day operations of the FACT as an organisation; its structure, its culture, the relations between different teams and the work of staff members, the processes of designing and delivering projects and devising audience engagement. As Jorgensen notes, crucial to gathering accurate and dependable information through participant observations is developing and sustaining

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13 For example Collaborative Doctoral Award in Manchester Art Gallery on little known gallery's poster collection by Melanie Horton. See Horton, M. 2010. *Propaganda, Pride and Prejudice: Revisiting the Empire Marketing Board Posters at the Manchester City Galleries*. PhD thesis. Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University.

14 Knifton, R, 2008. *Centre of the Creative Universe: Liverpool and the Avant-Garde*. PhD thesis. Manchester: Manchester Metropolitan University.

15 See an excellent account of AHRC funded collaborative research programme conducted in Tate Britain: Dewdney, A., Dibosa, D., Walsh V. 2013. *Post-critical Museology. Theory and Practice in the Art Museum*. London, New York: Routledge.

16 Jorgensen, D. L. 1989. 'Preface'. In D. L. Jorgensen (ed.) 1989. *Participant Observation: A Methodology for Human Studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. Online. Available through University of Liverpool Library website: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/library/>. Accessed: April 15, 2013. p. 9.

17 Ibid., p. 8.

relationship with the insiders in the field, based on trust and cooperation.<sup>18</sup> The process of establishing rapport is related to the researcher's ability to 'demonstrate a degree of accomplishment with the host culture and willingness to give something [...] in interacting with members', which generally requires 'extensive and intensive ordinary participation in their way of life'.<sup>19</sup>

These requirements were met through previous collaboration with FACT (working on the *War Veterans Vehicle* project, which as a significant part of the inaugural AND festival provided a 'degree of accomplishment') and intense participation in FACT's life through co-curation of an exhibition, which involved collaboration, to a higher or lesser extent, with all members of the team. The amount of time invested in working on the project (nearly three years) and close cooperation with many staff members contributed to establishing a strong relationship of exchange and trust with the team.

Immersion in the life of organisation, on a daily basis and working as part of the team, provided rich ground for participant observations, carried out during everyday practices such as internal and external meetings, openings and events and extensive conversations with FACT's staff. The observations were recorded as notes, which were reviewed at different stages of research process and contributed to the forming of analysis.

## Interviews

A series of unstructured, open-ended interviews were conducted with key members of FACT's programming team, as well other curators outside the institution, whose work has been referred to in the thesis, for example Sally Tallant, Director of the Liverpool Biennial. Since this research is synchronic, focusing predominantly on the current situation at FACT, the interviewees were primarily staff members currently working at FACT, although key past staff members were also interviewed. This said, the high rotation among curatorial staff, especially in the recent years, meant that all curators interviewed were already ex-curators at FACT as there are currently (at time of writing July 2014) no curators *per se* working in the organisation.

The interviews were designed in order to: one, gain an understanding of staff's experiences of curating and producing work at FACT – focusing on practicalities and challenges involved; two, explore staff member's interpretations and perceptions of the wider institutional practice and how their work contributes to the bigger picture and three, expand and provide additional information on issues identified at the observational stage. Most of the interviews were conducted at the latter stages of the research process and were designed as a means to expand upon issues uncovered during the observation stage.

The interviews were loosely structured, open-ended conversations with questions designed to gain more information about ways of working within the given programming strand; practicalities, challenges as well as objectives guiding the practice. Prior to the interview, the interviewees were provided with a list of example questions, which were used as prompts for guiding the conversation. Depending on the interlocutor, the core questions regarding curatorial approaches and production strategies were supplemented with more specific questions relating to their particular role in the organisation or a particular project of interest for the research that the person was involved in.

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18 Jorgensen, D. L. 1989. 'Developing and Sustaining Field Relationships.' In Jorgensen, *Participant Observation*. pp. 69-82.

19 Ibid., p. 76.



The interviews resulted in many interesting responses, providing a lot of anecdotal evidence for the analysis of the curatorial and institutional practice at FACT, and many of the interviews are quoted in the thesis. As with any kind of interview, there is a question about the validity and accuracy of the information obtained, due to the inherently subjective account that the interview invites, and the process of 'self-construction' of the interviewees, which often takes place in an interview situation.<sup>20</sup> However, the perceptions and experiences of staff, shared in the interview, provided rich information, and additional reference for data obtained through other research methods.

Due to a large volume of material generated through the interviews and the limitations of this study, only two excerpts of interviews, i.e. with FACT Director Mike Stubbs and with Omar Kholeif, the last person to hold a curatorial position at FACT, are included in the appendices. Those two examples were chosen as providing the most insight into the debates about the curatorial and institutional praxis at FACT.

## Practice-led research

Between November 2010 and June 2013, I worked as a part of FACT's team on designing, researching, planning and delivering the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition, which marked the 10th anniversary of FACT's building. The practice of co-curating an exhibition at FACT was one of the most important aspects of the institutional study. As already noted, the practical involvement of working at FACT has shaped this study, situating this research within practice-led paradigm.

The definition and methodology of practice-led research (often used interchangeably with 'practice-based research', 'practice as research' or 'research-through-practice') has been subject of many discussions, and while some argue that creative practice constitutes research, others point to the incommensurable nature of the two activities.<sup>21</sup> Practice-led research is understood here to be essentially different from practice-based research, although the two terms are often used synonymously. Following Candy, practice-based research is understood as 'an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice' whereas practice-led research is understood as 'concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice [...] The primary focus of the research [practice-led. A.K.B] is to advance knowledge about practice or to advance knowledge within practice.'<sup>22</sup>

Practice-led research at FACT was not designed to experiment with, or test out, new curatorial formats, with the aim of providing original knowledge in the process but to explore the practice of curating exhibitions at FACT. Co-curating *Turning FACT Inside Out* involved working in close collaboration with FACT's team on all aspects of the exhibition design and delivery including developing of the exhibition concept, proposing artists and artworks, working with artists on developing new commissions, budgeting, fundraising, writing curatorial texts, discussing the practical aspects of the project delivery and even sourcing exhibition materials. This experience provided an in-depth understanding of the processes of curating and producing exhibition at FACT and the complexities and contingencies of such.

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20 Gilham, B. 2005. *Research Interviewing. Range of Techniques: A Practical Guide*. Maidenhead: Open University Press. p. 7.

21 For a summary of discussion See Till, J. at al. 2007. 'AHRC Research Review Practice-Led Research in Art, Design and Architecture'. [PDF]. Online. Available at: [http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/43065/Practice-Led\\_Review\\_Nov07.pdf](http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/43065/Practice-Led_Review_Nov07.pdf). Accessed: January 18, 2013.

22 Candy, L. 2006. 'Practice-Based Research: A Guide.' Online. Available at: [www.mangold-international.com](http://www.mangold-international.com). Accessed: April 15, 2013.

## Case studies

*Turning FACT Inside Out* is a centrepiece of the FACT case study, which includes a series of examples of exhibitions and projects, produced within the three areas of programming (Exhibitions, Collaboration and Engagement, AND festival). The examples of projects and exhibitions illustrate a great variety of practices FACT has been commissioning and producing. The examples were chosen in order to compare different curatorial approaches and production models within FACT and facilitate a discussion of both the successes and failures of a given example of curatorial praxis. The aim is not solely to identify, describe and illustrate the different approaches within institutional curating but also to present the complexity and challenges, which new forms of artistic practice present to curators and institutions.

All of the examples discussed and analysed in the thesis were experienced first hand, and the majority of them have been developed or produced during the collaborative research period at FACT enabling a close observation of the ongoing processes. In addition to the first hand experience, the study of examples included analysis of primary documents, often less formal such as curatorial briefs or internal evaluation documents, as well as conversations with those involved in the production of those projects.

## Limitations of the Methodology

The collaborative nature of the project, which required an intense involvement with the institution, has posed significant challenges to the research process that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the dual role of researcher/observer and team member meant two different sets of objectives (planning and delivering a good exhibition and carrying out and completing a research project), which were often in conflict largely due to the amount of time required for both. Secondly, a long-term engagement as part of the team inevitably involves a risk of 'going native', i.e. developing over-rapport with the studied group to the point of losing objectivity.<sup>23</sup> Working as part of a tightly knit group in a specific working culture, which assumes that a lot of personal time and effort is willfully invested therefore blurring the boundaries between professional and personal life, made trying to stay objective even more difficult. Thirdly, this dual role raised problems of confidentiality and trust. Working as part of the exhibition team and participating in the everyday life of the organisation, my role and presence was unquestioned by other members of the team. This contributed to the general openness of staff, who felt they could share and discuss internal issues which would most likely be considered too confidential to discuss with an external observer. Macdonald, quoting Barreman, describes this as 'an ethnographic dilemma of trust', in which 'being allowed "back stage" may implicitly entail being trusted not to divulge that which is kept back stage.'<sup>24</sup>

As Macdonald observes, museums and galleries are very careful about the 'impression management and 'good PR' and there's distinction, as with every organisation, between the documents, which are

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23 Punch, K.F. 2005. *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE p. 183.

24 Macdonald, S. 2001. 'Ethnography in the Science Museum, London'. In D. N. Gellner, E. Hirsch (eds). 2001. *Inside Organisations. Anthropologists at Work*. Oxford: Berg. p. 92.

for the 'internal consumption' and those that can be used for external purposes.<sup>25</sup> Being perceived as a member of the team meant having an unrestricted access to the internal communication and documentation, which would not otherwise have been shared with an external researcher. The thesis refers to many internal documents, especially the exhibition evaluation documents, which are recorded notes from staff discussions reflecting on a particular exhibition.

Those documents are particularly valid as they record both successes and failures of given exhibitions and projects, as well as the curatorial and production processes behind them. However, as records of staff's conversations intended for FACT's internal purposes only, the documents include information that is potentially sensitive from the organisation's point of view and needed to be carefully selected. Additionally, the often informal nature of the discussions recorded in those notes means that they are not always self-explanatory. They require a good knowledge of FACT, its structure and general operations, as well as roles and responsibilities of people involved, in order for them to be useful, and for the reader to be able to properly contextualise the information of the evaluation reports. As this example illustrates, despite the risks that the intense practical involvement in the institution's operations bring, being embedded in the organisation allowed for a deep understanding of its culture, operations, which is a precondition of informed analysis

## Definitions of terms

This thesis seeks to describe and examine models of curatorial and institutional practice, which have emerged in response to new media and socially engaged art. The following section provides brief definitions of terms for the purpose of the thesis. The term 'institutional practice' is used in the thesis in its common understanding, referring simply to the practice of art museums and galleries, hence the section focuses on the remaining three key concepts that is 'curatorial practice', 'new media' and 'socially engaged art', the meaning of which is more broadly defined, and requires clarification for the purpose of the thesis.

### Curatorial practice

The profession of curator (from Latin *curare* – meaning *to take care of*) has traditionally been associated with museum practice, and the role of curator in this context is understood as that of a *caretaker* of collections and cultural heritage whose responsibilities include 'the care, development, study, enhancement and management of the collections of the museum'.<sup>26</sup>

Since the late 1980s, the role of curator has expanded to include a wide range of creative tasks, 'akin to artistic praxis'.<sup>27</sup> As O'Neill argues, 'the figure of curator has moved from being a caretaker of collections – a behind-the-scenes organizer and arbiter of taste – to an independently motivated practitioner with a more centralized position within the contemporary art world and its parallel commentaries'.<sup>28</sup> The role of curator varies depending on a specific context, in which he or she works: whether the curator is part of an organisation (a museum or a gallery) or works independently, as some of the curatorial responsibilities might be shared within a larger team. Generally, however, in contem-

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25 Ibid., p. 92.

26 Ruge, A. (ed.) 2008. 'ICOM, Museum Professions- European Frame of Reference'. [PDF]. Online. Available at: <http://icom.museum/professional-standards/professions/>. Accessed: April 13, 2013. p. 16.

27 O'Neil, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture* (s). p. 1.

28 Ibid., pp. 1-2.

porary art the role of curator involves every aspect of exhibition design, production, dissemination and documentation including: research and formulating ideas of the exhibition; commissioning art works and working with artists to develop ideas; providing context for exhibitions through writing; managing project budget; overseeing the installation process; designing public programme around the exhibition; overseeing archiving and documentation of projects.

## New media art

The definition of the term 'new media art' has been widely discussed, however, there is no consensus and no generally accepted definition and it has become a commonplace to regard the term as 'highly unsatisfactory'.<sup>29</sup> Indeed there are many problems with it, and as Cook and Graham point out, 'each of the words in the term new media art can be hotly contested'.<sup>30</sup> It could be argued that the practices it refers to are neither 'new' (as its artistic genealogy goes back to a long way)<sup>31</sup> nor can be defined as a 'medium' (firstly, what is called new media is inherently a hybrid set of practices and secondly, computer can 'simulate' all media, and 'remediate' contents created in the 'old' media, breaking with any notion of medium-specificity)<sup>32</sup> and some question whether new media should be considered in the paradigm of fine 'art' (or rather, as part of contemporary culture, due to its ubiquitous character).<sup>33</sup>

Despite the problems with the definition of new media art, the term is used here as a shorthand for a range of practices which are commonly grouped under it. These include 'cultural objects which use digital computer technology for distribution and exhibition (Internet, web sites, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMs and DVD's Virtual Reality, and computer-generated special effects')<sup>34</sup> 'network-based digital art, installations, virtual environments, interactive or digital performances, cross-disciplinary artworks that use digital media, computer-based audio art, [...] digital video installations',<sup>35</sup> as well as 'art/science projects such as generative and biotech art, which links the work of artists with the research of scientists'.<sup>36</sup>

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29 Cook, S., Graham, B. 2012. *Rethinking Curating. Art After New Media*. Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press. p. 2. The authors also provide a useful list of terms which often replace new media art such as 'art and technology, art/sci, computer art, electronic art, digital art, digital media, intermedia, multimedia, tactical media, emerging media, upstart media, variable media, locative media, immersive art, interactive art, and Things That You Plug In.' (Cook, Graham, *Rethinking Curating*, p. 4).

30 Ibid., p.3.

31 When considering defining characteristics or set of concerns central to new media art such as questions of interactivity, multimedia, telecommunication, participation, connectivity, openness of the artwork, it becomes apparent that many examples of artists dealing with those questions can be found in art history; in the tradition of the Avant-garde, Russian Constructivism, Conceptualism, Performance, Fluxus, Mail art, Situationism and others. On artistic genealogies of new media See Grau, *Media Art Histories*; Gere, *Digital Culture*.

32 On the concept of 'remediation' See Bolter, J., Grusin, R. 2000. *Remediation. Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press.

33 For the summary of discussion See Cook, Graham, *Rethinking Curating*, Chapter 2. 'The Art Formerly Known as New Media.' pp. 19-47.

34 Manovich, L. 2001. 'New Media from Borges to HTML'. [PDF]. Online. Available at: [http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/031-new-media-from-borges-to-html/30\\_article\\_2001.pdf](http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/031-new-media-from-borges-to-html/30_article_2001.pdf). Accessed: July 26, 2013. p. 10.

35 Diamond, S. 2003, 'Silicon to Carbon: Thought Chips.' In M. Townsend (ed.) 2003. *Beyond the Box. Diverging Curatorial Practices*. Banff: Banff Centre Press. p. 142.

36 Cook, S. 2004. *The Search for a Third Way of Curating New Media Art: Balancing Content and Context in and Out of Institution*. PhD thesis. Sunderland: University of Sunderland. p. 23.

## Socially engaged art

Similarly to 'new media art', the term 'socially engaged art' is broad and vaguely defined. Bishop argues the term is too ambiguous as in fact 'art always responds to its environment', and engages with its contexts, social and others.<sup>37</sup> In its common use, the term 'socially engaged art' encompasses a broad range of hybrid practices which emerged within what has been termed as 'social turn' (or 'return to the social') in contemporary art to indicate a shift in contemporary art practice, characterised by 'artistic interest in collectivity, collaboration and direct engagement with specific social constituencies'.<sup>38</sup> Such understanding of socially engaged art includes other definitions such as 'relational art' proposed by Bourriaud (referring to predominantly participatory models of artistic practice, in the audience 'comes together as a community and participates in the moments of sociability set up by the artist')<sup>39</sup> as well as 'dialogical art' proposed by Kester (defined as practices operating both in social and political context based on 'reciprocal process of dialogue and mutual education')<sup>40</sup> or 'community based-art' (artistic activity based in a community setting).<sup>41</sup> The term 'socially engaged art' also encompasses the new definitions of public art, such as 'new genre public art' proposed by Lacy,<sup>42</sup> and 'art in the public interest', proposed by Raven,<sup>43</sup> that shift the understanding of public art towards artistic practices which employ art as a tool for participatory democracy and social change.<sup>44</sup>

The term 'socially engaged art' in the thesis refers to all the above practices to indicate artistic activities that engage with different aspects of social and political reality, characterised predominantly by process based and participatory ways of working.

## Summary and outline of chapters

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part is a literature and theory review that outlines the critical context for the examination of FACT's institutional and curatorial praxis. The first part of the review is dedicated to the contemporary discussions around art institutions. It includes attention to critical reflection on the changing role and the shape of art institutions and the artistic and cultural factors involved in these shifts, such as the emergence of new media practices. It also draws upon literature that considers the impact of broader socio-political and economic factors on the functioning of art institutions. The second part of the literature review looks at the new curatorial approaches that have developed within and outside art institutions as a response to both new media and socially engaged practices.

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37 Bishop, C. 2012. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London, New York: Verso. p. 1.

38 Bishop, C. 2006. 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents.' *Artforum*. February Issue. p. 178.

39 Bourriaud N. 1998. *Relational Aesthetics*. Paris: Les Presse du Reel. p. 44.

40 Kester, G.H. 2004. *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkley, Calif: University of California Press. p. 151.

41 For discussion about community-based art See Kelly, O. 1984. *Community, Art and the State: Storming the Citadels*. London: Comedia.

42 Lacy, S. (ed.) 1995. *Mapping the Terrain. New Genre Public Art*. Seattle, Wash: Bay Press.

43 Raven, A. (ed.) 1993. *Art in the Public Interest*. New York: De Capo Press.

44 Lacy, S. 1995. 'Introduction. Cultural Pilgrimages and Metaphoric Journeys.' In Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*. pp. 28-29.

The second part of the thesis is focused on institutional and curatorial practice at FACT. Chapter 2 provides a background to FACT, outlining its history and its current institutional structure. Following this, Chapter 3 describes FACT's institutional and curatorial practice, examining a series of projects produced within the three main areas of FACT's programming: Exhibitions, Collaboration and Engagement, and the Abandon Normal Devices (AND) festival. The analysis focuses on different ways of working developed within those programming areas, the type of artwork produced, as well as different considerations and limitations that come with each particular programming framework.

The third part of the thesis is a case study of the exhibition *Turning FACT Inside Out*, giving a detailed insight into the curatorial and production process behind the FACT building's tenth anniversary exhibition. Discussed in this part are the processes of the exhibition development and production, the final shape the exhibition took, its public reception and its evaluation by FACT's programme team. Closing the case study part is reflection on the lessons learnt from *Turning FACT Inside Out* regarding curatorial ways of working and the institutional mechanisms that are at play in producing an exhibition and defining its meaning.

The conclusion chapter summarises the research findings regarding the institutional and curatorial practice at FACT, and it considers them in the context of critical reflection about art institutions and curating, drawing on debates outlined in the contextual review. The chapter returns to the research questions and discusses broader implications that the study of FACT's practice has for the work of curators and institutions, beyond the local context of FACT, and points out suggestions for further research.

## **Part I. Context**





# 1. Contextual review

## 1.1. Rethinking institutions

The literature on art institutions and curatorial practice has grown exponentially in recent years. The growth of the number of museums around the globe and the proliferation of art institutions within the context of an economic and socially important expansion of the culture industry has seen many academic disciplines, for which art institutions were not traditionally a focus, 'come to see the museum as site at which some of the most interesting and significant of their debates and questions can be explored in novel, and often exciting and applicable, ways.'<sup>1</sup> The social sciences in particular have brought many new perspectives to bear on the study of art institutions, the majority of which necessarily lie beyond the scope of this study.

This review focuses on changes in the shape of art institutions highlighting three particular aspects of the transformation of institutional models: the shift towards more socially responsive and inclusive institution (informed by institutional critique, new museology and new institutionalism) changes in institutional practice brought about by new media, and the move towards more entrepreneurial and market driven models of institutional operations, influenced by socio-economic and political factors and wider changes in the functioning of culture in contemporary society. In reviewing the existing literature surrounding the three key factors in contemporary institutional transformation outlined above, this part of the thesis sets out to bring together perspectives, which are rarely considered together and in so doing identifies gaps in the subject literature.

The debate on the role and shape of art institutions coming from the traditional museum and gallery studies rarely considers new institutional formats and ways of working which have been developed within new media institutions. Similarly, the majority of curatorial literature rarely considers novel approaches to curating and producing art, which have been proposed and tested out in the field of new media curating. The review brings together these perspectives in considering how transformations within the traditional art world and challenges posed by new media have provided theoretical underpinnings and models for new curatorial and institutional practice and, as such, frames the unique space that this dissertation fills within a broader field of enquiry.

### 1.1.1. Institutional Critique, New Museology and New Institutionalism

In the 20th century, art institutions underwent a series of radical changes. The role and the shape of art institutions have been widely debated and increasingly questioned in the context of transformations of contemporary culture and wider socio-economic pressures. The notion of crisis or indeed crises, which have accompanied the discourse on museums, have never been so prevalent as in the recent years, which have seen a series of cuts in arts funding, causing renewed urgency in the discussion about the role and the future of museums and galleries.<sup>2</sup> Starting with the debates coming from new museology and institutional critique, through to the more recent discourse of new institutionalism, this part of the review focuses on how these debates have had significant, tangible, implications for museum and art institutions policy and practice.

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1 MacDonald, S. 2011. 'Expanding Museum Studies: An Introduction.' In S. Macdonald (ed.) 2011. *A Companion to Museum Studies*. Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. p. 1.

2 See International Council of Museums, 2012. *Museum Beyond the Crises. Annual Conference Proceedings*. Istanbul, Turkey, 12-14 November 2012. [PDF]. Online. Available at: <http://cimam.org/wp-content/uploads/CIMAM-2012-Annual-Conference-Publication.pdf>. Accessed: March 14, 2012.

In the process of rethinking museum practices, artists played a crucial role. Starting from 1960s, artists have brought critical attention to the politics of representation inherent in museological practice and have 'articulated, through their work a critique of the museum'.<sup>3</sup> The first wave of institutional critique<sup>4</sup> (late 1960s and 1970s) was predominantly concerned with the authoritarian role of art institutions. Artists looked for a more inclusive; politically and culturally representative alternative in order to negate the traditional museum *modus operandi*.<sup>5</sup> These demands for the reform of museums were grounded in the larger socio-political climate, including the rise of the civil right movement and, as such, they included 'equal exhibition opportunities for artists of color and expanded legal rights for all artists'.<sup>6</sup> This first wave of institutional critique represented the beginning of a long and ongoing period of debate about the role and shape of art institutions in society.

Partly in response to this institutional critique, since the 1970s art institutions have undergone radical changes, accompanied by an increased theoretical reflection on the socio-political and educational roles of museums and galleries. This heightened critical reflexivity around museums, became to be known as 'new museology' or 'new museum theory'. A book *The New Museology* (1989), edited by Vergo, summarised the 70s and 80s debate around museums. New museology introduced new theoretical perspectives in the museum studies, placing emphasis on the social, political and ideological contexts of museums operations. New museology formulated its postulates in opposition to the *old* museology, which according to Vergo was too focused on museum *methods*, paying little attention to its *purpose*.<sup>7</sup> Concentrated on issues of conservation, collection, documentation and museum administration the old museology, according to Vergo, failed to recognise and respond to challenges and responsibilities of the museum as a predominantly social institution. Vergo called for a radical re-examination of the role of museums within society in order for museums to become relevant social, political and educational institutions.<sup>8</sup>

New museology was aligned with the second wave of institutional critique (in the 1980s) which shifted its emphasis from the institutionally predetermined condition of art reception and production

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3 Marstine, J. (ed.) 2006. *New Museum: Theory and Practice: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blakwell. p. 6.

4 The term 'institutional critique' was coined in the mid 1980's by members of the Whitney Independent Study Programme, notably by Andrea Fraser, and has been applied retrospectively to a range of artistic practices which question the social and political aspects of museum and galleries operations.

5 Alberro, A. 2009. 'Institutions, Critique and Institutional Critique'. In A. Alberro, B. Stimson (eds.) 2009. *Institutional Critique. An Anthology of Artists's Writings*. Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press. p. 3.

6 Moore, A.W. 2007. 'Artists Collectives: Focus on New York, 1975-2000'. In G. Scholette, B. Stimson (eds.) 2007. *Collectivism After Modernism. The Art of Social Imagination*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. pp. 196-197. See also Fascina, F. 1999. *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties in America*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

7 Vergo, P. (ed.) 1989. *The New Museology*. 4th ed. London: Reaktion Books. p. 3.

8 Ibid., p. 4. However, new museology was not an entirely new discourse. As many point out, postulates similar to those of new museology could be tracked to many earlier examples of reflection on museum practice, dating back to 1930s. One of the most radical response to the critical reflection on museum was formulated by Henri Riviere, the founding father of 'ecomuseum' movement, which proposed an alternative model of cultural institutions; embedded in local culture, driven by communities and focusing on preserving local heritage, promoting sustainable development and local tourism. The model of ecomuseums have become successful and provided a template for many local cultural institutions in countries across the world. As Szczerski argues, considering the radical concept of ecomuseums, Vergo's book seemed to offer a rather conservative approach, justifying rather than questioning the existence of traditional art institutions. See Szczerski, A. 2005. 'Kontekst, Edukacja, Publicznosc – Muzeum z Perspektywy Nowej Muzeologii'. In M. Popczyk (ed.) 2005. *Muzeum Sztuki*. Krakow: Universitas. pp. 335-345.

to the politics of representation itself.<sup>9</sup> The critique focused on the role institutions play not only in material forms of representation, but more importantly, symbolic ones, examining how institutions create and fix identities.<sup>10</sup> The shift in emphasis was accompanied by the shift in position from which the critique was conducted. As Raunig points out, whereas the first institutional critique sought 'distance from the institution' the second wave 'addressed the inevitable *involvement in* the institution'.<sup>11</sup>

The critical reflections of the new museology led to substantial revisions of museum practice in which different aspects of museum operations including organisational structure, staffing, exhibition and educational practices, display techniques, business models all of which were subject to the question: 'How might these elements be altered to suit new institutional purposes and conditions?'<sup>12</sup> New museology criticised the traditional departmentalisation of activities and expertise within museums and called for a closer collaboration between all departments, centred around planning and organising exhibitions.<sup>13</sup> Curators were called upon to shift their emphasis from expertise driven focus on collections and artwork towards exhibitions and displays, which would respond to the expectations of a museum audience.<sup>14</sup> Increased attention was also given to the 'front line' workers – docents, security attendants and maintenance workers – recognising vital role they can play in improving the quality of both audience experience and museum operations by relaying public responses back to the institution.<sup>15</sup>

New museology also brought critical attention to the practicalities of exhibition making. As Vergo argued, even though exhibitions have been the main focus of activities of museums as well as galleries, the practice of exhibition making remained largely unexamined.<sup>16</sup> The museums' tendency to provide overtly interpreted information on its collection and exhibitions, was critiqued and new museology advocated for more open narratives; narratives that did not just provide ready answers but also questions and left space for individual interpretations.<sup>17</sup> The education departments were expected to introduce a range of interpretative frameworks without subscribing to any universally valid systems of cultural signification. In order to create more diverse communication strategies, making the museum experience generally more accessible, museums were also advised to adopt new technologies.<sup>18</sup> Suggestions arising from new museological critiques – aimed at making museums more open, inclusive and socially responsible institutions – were widely adopted, quickly becoming a central part of contemporary museum practice. Some, however, blame new museology for setting museums on the path of 'disneyfication'.<sup>19</sup>

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9 See Raunig, G. 2009. 'Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming'. In G. Raunig, G. Ray (eds.) 2009. *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice. Reinventing Institutional Critique*. Mayfly Books. pp. 3-13.

10 Ibid., p. 9.

11 Ibid., p. 9.

12 Stam, C.D. 1993. 'The Informed Muse: the Implications of "The New Museology" for Museum Practice.' *Museum Management and Curatorship*. 12: 3. Online. Available through University of Liverpool Library website: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/library/>. Accessed: March 13, 2012. p. 275.

13 Ibid., pp. 275-276.

14 Ibid., pp. 276-278.

15 Ibid., p. 276.

16 Vergo, P. 1989. 'The Reticent Object.' In Vergo, *The New Museology*. p. 43.

17 Stam, 'The Informed Muse'. p. 276.

18 Ibid., p. 278.

19 See Harrison, J. D. 1993. 'Ideas of Museums in the 1990s.' *Museum Management and Curatorship*. 13: 2. p. 166.

The contemporary debate about art institutions has often been influenced by what has been termed the 'third wave' of institutional critique. Raunig and Ray argue that the new phase of institutional critique – the third wave – goes beyond the earlier two phases of 1970s and 1990s, 'particularly as a combination of social critique, institutional critique and self-critique'.<sup>20</sup> The third wave combines the critical considerations of the first two phases, the criticism of the authoritarian role of the institutions and the critique of representation, but its importance lies predominantly in the fact that it is conducted from within art institutions as a critical self-reflection.<sup>21</sup> It has been driven both by a theoretical analysis of institutions in relation to socio-political and cultural transformations as well as by a more practically oriented reflection by curators and directors of institutions looking for examples of curatorial and institutional strategies which could help internalise the critical reflection and transform the institutions from within.<sup>22</sup>

An example of museum theory, formulated from within art institution is new institutionalism. New institutionalism – a term borrowed from sociology and economy – refers to the current critical reflection on art institutions and curatorial practice, conducted from within, marking a paradigm shift in defining the role of art institutions in society and changing the way they operate. The emergence of the new institutionalism debate is usually linked to some of the key factors marking the transformation of the contemporary art world over the last several decades including: one, the rise of successful independent curators in the 90s who have subsequently taken up directorial positions in established institutions; two, the proliferation of biennales, festivals and more experimental presentation platforms; three, the surge of participative and collaborative practices, often event and process based, which require different production and presentation strategies to the traditional art object focused exhibition models.<sup>23</sup>

One of the defining characteristic of the new art institutions is a shift of focus from exhibitions production and support to a wide range of activities not necessarily centred around the exhibition programme.<sup>24</sup>

'Now, the term "art" might be starting to describe that space in society for experimentation, questioning and discovery that religion, science and philosophy have occupied sporadically in former times. It has become an active space rather than one of passive observation. Therefore the institutions to foster it have to be part-community centre, part-laboratory and part-academy, with less need for the established showroom function.'<sup>25</sup>

Instead of the traditional gallery mode of display the new institutions try to adopt and incorporate the working methods of artists, placing emphasis on the production process as well as the presentation and reception of the work.<sup>26</sup> As Doherty argues, new institutionalism 'embraces the dominant

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20 Raunig, Ray, *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice*. p. XIII.

21 Ibid., p. XIII.

22 See for example Montman, N. (ed.) 2006. *Art and Its Institutions. Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations*. London: Black Dog Publishing.

23 See Farquharson, A. 2006. 'Bureaux de Change'. *Frieze Magazine Online*. Issue 101. Online. Available at: [http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/bureaux\\_de\\_change/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/bureaux_de_change/). Accessed: January 15, 2012; Doherty, C. 2004. 'The Institution is Dead! Long Live the Institution! Contemporary Art and New Institutionalism'. *Engage*. Issue 15. [PDF]. Online. Available at: <http://www.engage.org/seebook.aspx?id=697>. Accessed: January 15, 2012. pp. 1-9.

24 Farquharson, 'Bureaux de Change'.

25 Esche quoted in Doherty, 'The Institution is Dead!' p. 2.

26 Doherty, 'The Institution is Dead!' p. 2.

strand of the contemporary art practice – namely that which employs dialogue and participation to produce event or process-based works rather than objects of passive consumption.<sup>27</sup> This is reflected in the process of rethinking the use of spaces, which are increasingly multifunctional, accommodating both production and presentation; no longer spatially separated or delegated to designated areas but sharing the same space and time.<sup>28</sup>

New institutions also support novel curatorial approaches, including what has been termed as ‘responsive curating’ i.e. that which encourages and supports artistic responses to the specific social, cultural, political, locational contexts, outside of the institutional boundaries. Doherty lists FACT as one of the examples of the UK ‘new institutions’, alongside Whitechapel and INIVA:

‘Their programmes are distinguished from the conventional centre model by an inter-disciplinary approach, often using strands to allow for particular projects and events to develop through different guises and timeframes, moving through the spaces of their buildings, online, and off-site, when and where appropriate.’<sup>29</sup>

Such inter-disciplinary approach requires, as Doherty notes, not only integration of programming staff, whose roles increasingly cross over between programming of exhibitions and a variety of public and educational events but also ‘shifts in visitor behaviour back and forth between reception and participation.’<sup>30</sup>

The last nearly 50 years of critical discussion and revision of art institutions has facilitated a paradigm shift towards more responsive and accessible public institutions. Institutional critique and new museology questioned the values and assumptions, shape and role of art institutions and, in pointing to the key role art institutions play in culture and society, proposed a series of changes in the way in which they operate. New institutionalism, as the most recent example of institutional self-reflection, proposed new institutional formats which combine operational flexibility with a strong focus on social inclusiveness.

### **1.1.2. New media and challenges to art institutions**

Transformations of art institutions have also been necessitated and enabled by new technologies and changes in the artistic practices as engendered by new media. New media are omnipresent in contemporary museums and galleries, changing the way institutions present exhibitions, archive collections and engage their audiences. Many museums, including the largest in the world such as MoMa in New York, Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Palace of Versailles, have digitised their collections and offer virtual tours of their galleries and interiors.<sup>31</sup> Digital archiving is also leading a revolution in the way in which museums manage their collections, drastically increasing the storage capacities and ability to search, organise, build and disseminate knowledge around collections.<sup>32</sup> Social media have significantly changed the way in which

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27 Ibid., p. 2.

28 Farquharson, ‘Bureaux de Change.’

29 Doherty, ‘The Institution is Dead!’ p. 2.

30 Ibid., p. 3.

31 See Google Art Project at: Google, 2013. ‘Art Project’. Online. Available at: <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/project/art-project>. Accessed: January 20, 2013.

32 See Parry, R. 2007. *Recoding the Museum. Digital Heritage and the Technologies of Change*. London: Routledge.

museums communicate with their audience, providing more instant channels of communication and wider outreach as well as tools for audience feedback and market research. Interactive installations and hands-on exhibits are a very popular use of new technologies in museums. They not only allow different layers of information to be presented in the one display and make the museum experience more attractive and accessible but have also changed the audience's mode of behaviour, from that of the passive observer to the active learner.

New media as set of devices have changed the way museum and galleries operate and there exists already a fast growing body of literature addressing these issues.<sup>33</sup> However, despite museums appropriating some of its forms, such as interactivity, the literature rarely touches upon new media as an artistic practice and the type of institutional and curatorial approaches that are required in order to accommodate the specificity of new media art. It is doubly surprising that the debate around the effects of new technologies on art institutions so rarely coalesces with debates deriving from new media art studies as – it could be argued – it is new media art that brought forth the new models of production and participation in culture, most closely reflecting the changes in the way culture is produced, disseminated and consumed in the information society.

As Christine Paul notes 'new media art is, by nature, deeply interwoven with forms and structures of our information society – the networks and collaborative models that are creating new forms of cultural production and profoundly shape today's cultural climate.'<sup>34</sup> Paul argues that new media practices by their very nature question traditional institutional models and as such intersect with institutional critique:

'As process oriented art that is inherently collaborative, participatory, networked and variable, new media practices tends to challenge the structures and logic of museums and art galleries and reorients the concept and arena of the exhibition. New media art seems to call for a "ubiquitous museum" or "museum without walls", a parallel, distributed, living information space open to artistic interference – a space for exchange, collaborative creation, and presentation that is transparent and flexible.'<sup>35</sup>

The open, 'ubiquitous' museum which new media call for, not only extends beyond the physical boundaries of the building through systems of networks and presentation platforms, but also challenges the very core of museum and gallery practice. New media are difficult to support, present, maintain, collect and communicate to the audience within the traditional institutional format, and as such require new ways of working.<sup>36</sup>

As Paul explains, the inherently variable, time- and process- based nature of new media, often produced in collaboration, and through customisation of existing technologies, has shifted the emphasis from *object* to *process*, challenging the notions of value traditionally associated with art objects

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33 See Parry, R. (ed.) 2010. *Museums in a Digital Age*. London: Routledge; Din, H., Hecht, P. (eds.) 2007. *The Digital Museum: A Think Guide*. Washington, DC: American Alliance of Museum Press; Cameron, F., Kenderdine, S. (eds.) 2010. *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse*. Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press; Kalay, Y. E. at al. (eds.) 2007. *New Heritage: New Media and Cultural Heritage*. London, New York: Routledge; Henning, M. 2011. 'New Media' In Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*. pp. 302-319.

34 Paul, C. 2006. 'New Media Art and Institutional Critique. Networks vs Institutions.' [PDF]. Online. Available at [http://intelligentagent.com/writing\\_samples/CP\\_New\\_Media\\_Art\\_IC.pdf](http://intelligentagent.com/writing_samples/CP_New_Media_Art_IC.pdf). Accessed: January 20, 2013. [no pagination].

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

and authorship.<sup>37</sup> According to Paul, the durational, interactive and often non-linear nature of new media artworks require museums and galleries to promote and encourage different spectatorship models; more flexible, open to various timeframes through which the work might unfold, supporting more interactive approach and moving beyond passive contemplation. New media also requires new infrastructures to be put in place, which support technologically more complex work but also create platforms, extending the physical gallery into the digital public realm. The concept of museum or gallery as a presentation space is superseded by the idea of museum/gallery as an 'access point', a 'node' in a cultural network.<sup>38</sup>

The different ways of working and new institutional platforms for production and presentation brought by new media have contributed to the redefinition of traditional art context. Beryl Graham's case study of the SFMoMA exhibition *010101. Art in Technological Times* (2001) provides an insight into 'how institutional structures are compelled to reconfigure around new media art'.<sup>39</sup> The exhibition aimed to show the effect of new technologies on contemporary art, architecture and design. As Graham explains, the nature of the works on show, which did not fit the traditional art and design categories and blurred the boundaries between various mediums and formats, required closer collaboration across all curatorial and educational departments. This necessitated a sharing of knowledge and expertise as well as the establishment of a new cross-departmental critical framework. As Graham points out, the blurring occurred not only within the institutional structure – that is between traditionally separated departments – but also between particular roles as well as between the art and the informational, or interpretative, layer. In the context of *010101*, SFMoMA's website came to function not only as an information portal but also as an exhibition site for Net based works. The nature and level of technological expertise required meant that departments, such as Information Systems and Services, that were not usually involved in the exhibitions became instrumental in the planning and production of the show.<sup>40</sup>

As the discussions referred to above indicate, new media has, by means of practice rather than theoretical postulates, provided an impulse for rethinking and redesigning institutional practice in intersection with new museology and institutional critique. The process of extending the art institution through a network of interrelated production and dissemination spaces, has, to a large extent, fulfilled the postulates of new museology, particularly as they relate to more diverse platforms of communication, closer collaboration between departments and more open and flexible communication strategies. However, although new media art has slowly entered the traditional museum and gallery context, contributing to the process of rethinking established presentation models and institutional practice, many argue that new media art will always remain 'incompatible' with the traditional art institution, and that the art museum is altogether 'the wrong paradigm' for new media art.<sup>41</sup>

Outside the traditional museum and gallery environment, new media artists and curators have developed their own presentation format and platforms. The genealogy of new media art is diverse and complex, with roots in 'military-industrial-academic complex', the art and technology move-

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37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Graham, B. 2002. 'Curating New Media Art: SFMOMA and 010101'. Online. Available at: <http://www.crumbweb.org/getCRUMReports.php?&sublink=2>. Accessed: March, 12 2012.

40 Ibid.

41 Cook, Graham, *Rethinking Curating*. p.149.

ment, experimental music, and the entertainment industry.<sup>42</sup> As such, the early presentation platforms for new media art were equally diverse ranging from academic conferences, artists studios, research labs and science museums to festivals and technology fairs.

One of the most important places for development of and experimentation with new technologies as artistic tools were laboratories. Michael Century traces the development of the studio labs; 'hybrid innovative institutions' which he argues were instrumental in fostering creative applications of technology.<sup>43</sup> Studio-labs emerged in the 1960s, concurrently with a shift in thinking about science and art, and the development of transdisciplinary approaches.<sup>44</sup> In 1960s and 1970s, labs were established at universities and artist centres in order to 'support open-ended exploration of new and emerging technologies by artists'.<sup>45</sup> These labs were dedicated to artistic experimentation and were relatively autonomous and aesthetically independent.<sup>46</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s, labs were created as part of the new media institutions and festivals which were emerging at the time. These labs were often co-funded or supported by private corporations interested in new media creativity and innovation, and their purpose was a mix of artistic experimentation with potential commercial application (e.g. the MIT Media lab, which started to attract large corporate funding, or the Xerox Parc artistic residency programme).<sup>47</sup>

Since the 1960s, labs have remained important parts of the new media ecology. Their ways of working have shaped the organisational structures of media centres, of which labs became key elements.<sup>48</sup> The most important aspect of laboratories as platforms for the development and presentation of new media art is their emphasis on the process of experimentation rather than the outcomes of the process. The idea is to make the process visible and accessible to the public with a presentation format that is not based on display, but upon active participation.<sup>49</sup> Labs in new media institutions, as Cook and Graham discuss, are multi-functional and can support all stages of artistic production and dissemination, including research and development, production and presentation. By means of events, workshops or exhibitions labs can also present works at different stages, starting from the concept, through the work-in-progress to the finished 'product'.<sup>50</sup>

Another key characteristic of new media labs is their interdisciplinarity; they are equally places for artists, technologists, scientists, designers, product developers, providing a community for practitioners to work within. They also offer interdisciplinary support, often developing – through their

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42 Gere, C. 2008. 'New Media Art and the Gallery.' In C. Paul (ed.) 2008. *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond. Curatorial Models for Digital Art*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. p. 19.

43 Century, M. 2003. 'Pathways to Innovation in Digital Culture.' *The International Journal of Urban Labour and Leisure* 5: 2. [PDF]. Online. Available at: <http://www.ijull.co.uk/vol5/2/century.pdf>. Accessed: December 15, 2013. p.1.

44 Ibid., p. 7.

45 Examples of these early labs quoted by Century include Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT) funded by Robert Rauschenberg, and Bell Labs physicist Billy Kluver in NY 1966, MIT lab, and ICRAM (Institute de Recherche et Coordination en Acoustique et Musique) in Paris.

46 Ibid., pp. 7-8.

47 Ibid., p. 8.

48 As Cook and Graham point out leading media centres such as Medialab Prado, V2 in Rotterdam, and Watershed in Bristol all have active labs. See Cook, Graham, *Rethinking Curating*. Chapter 'The Lab – Experimental, Interdisciplinary, and Research-led.' pp. 234-242.

49 Cook, Graham, *Rethinking Curating*, p. 237.

50 Ibid., p. 238.



staff – a knowledge base incorporating wide range of expertise and skill sets.<sup>51</sup> For all of these reasons, labs ‘certainly offer the kind of facilities and knowledge for multidisciplinary production that suits the needs of media art.’<sup>52</sup> However, as Cook and Graham point out, they also present various challenges, particularly in terms of the costs of infrastructure and staffing. Being expensive places to run, labs within publicly funded art institutions, can sometimes move down the priority list since they can be less ‘visually attractive’ than more traditional gallery exhibition spaces and are unable to accommodate large audience numbers.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to labs, another important institution of new media art is the festival. Festivals proved to be a successful format for presenting new media work, and have been on the rise since late 1970’s, when Ars Electronica festival premiered (1979). During 1980s other key media festivals were established including Manifestation for Unstable Media (later DEAF, 1987), South by South West (SXSW) 1987 in Austin, Texas, Video Positive festival in Liverpool (1989), ISEA (1988) and VideoFilmFest (later Transmediale) Berlin, (1988). The surge of festivals continued through the 90s (Lovebytes, Sheffield, 1994, onedotzero, London, 1996, Future Everything, Manchester 1995, and new festivals continue to arrive on the scene (e.g. AV Festival, Newcastle, funded in 2003; Abandon Normal Devices, Liverpool and Manchester, funded in 2009). There is a great variety of festivals, which differ in their focus, format, outputs, scale, type of audience and timeframes ranging from major platforms for showcasing the latest artistic and technological achievements such as SIGGRAPH<sup>54</sup> through, equally large although addressed to a wider audience SXSW, bringing together a conference with festivals of music, film and interactive media, to festivals such as Abandon Normal Devices at the intersection of new media, artists film and contemporary art.

Cook and Graham discuss the characteristic of festival format as a platform for new media art.<sup>55</sup> As inherently flexible presentation platforms, festivals have easily accommodated the hybrid nature of new media works, presented through time-based events, screenings, and performances, workshops as well as exhibitions.<sup>56</sup> As festivals take place in multiple locations, usually spread around the city, in galleries, public places and often adapting existing or unusual spaces, they can accommodate any type of artistic format be it film, interactive installation, performance, or urban game.<sup>57</sup> Festivals can afford to be more experimental and due to their short durations they often incorporate projects which are work-in-progress and do not require a difficult and often expensive maintenance plan.<sup>58</sup> This allows the festival to be focused on new developments in the field as well as offer artists and curators an opportunity to exchange ideas, get feedback on their work and find potential collaborators.<sup>59</sup> As Cadwallar point out, in the 80s and 90s the technologies used in new media art

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51 Ibid., p. 241.

52 Ibid., p. 242.

53 Ibid., p. 242.

54 SIGGRAPH (Special Interest Group on GRAPHics and Interactive Technologies) is an international community of researchers (founded in 1974), which supports and promotes innovation in computer graphics and interactive techniques through series of conferences, workshops, exhibitions, publications and awards. See SIGGRAPH, 2014. ‘About ACM SIGGRAPH’. Online. Available at: <http://www.siggraph.org/about/about-acm-siggraph>. Accessed: June 12, 2014.

55 See Cook, Graham, *Rethinking Curating*. Chapter ‘Festivals – New Hybrid, and (Upwardly/) Mobile’ pp. 216-224.

56 Ibid., p. 222.

57 Ibid., p. 222.

58 Ibid., p. 223.

59 Ibid., p. 218.

were expensive and not many galleries were able to afford them. Festivals offered a relatively cost effective alternative to gallery exhibition; 'festivals have the potential to attract large-scale crossover audiences for a wide-ranging programme within a concentrated period of time. In a festival format the costs of staging and maintaining work are reduced and the possibilities of developing longer-term marketing activity with sponsoring and advertising are increased.'<sup>60</sup>

Festivals have been hugely popular and many of them grew exponentially to include different artistic approaches – such as South By South West, or Future Sonic (which became Future Everything) – which were originally music festivals grew to become expanded productions with conferences, exhibitions, performances, live events, makers fairs and more. Some of the festivals became institutions, such as Ars Electronica, and FACT as it evolved from Video Positive festival.

Ars Electronica is an interesting example of a new media art institution, which grew out of a festival. Ars Electronica began in 1979 in Linz, as a festival of 'art, technology and society'.<sup>61</sup> Initially, the festival took place on biennial basis, and later, in 1986, it became an annual event, with a different theme each year.<sup>62</sup> In 1987, Ars Electronica premiered an annual international competition of electronic art – Prix Ars Electronica – as a platform for showcasing new developments in electronic and new media art in several categories. In 1999, Ars Electronica opened its first building – The Museum of the Future – which was accompanied by the launch of Ars Electronica Futurelab, a media lab set up to produce content for the centre and the festival.<sup>63</sup> Future Lab consists of four laboratory spaces, which are designed to provide artists – through artists-in-residence programmes – with an opportunity to work with new technologies and develop their practice.<sup>64</sup>

Roy Ascott, British artist and pioneer of media art, described Ars Electronica as a 'dynamic organism' rather than a fixed and static institution and presented it as model for the 'museum of the twenty-first century'.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the institution, which combines large exhibition spaces, a major festival, lab, and an art prize, has provided a multifaceted platform for the development and presentation of new art forms. The Ars Electronic Prize (Prix) which is an open submission competition, (currently in 12 categories including computer animation, interactive art, digital music and sound art, hybrid art and digital communities)<sup>66</sup> continues to be at the forefront of presenting new developments in the field and has, since its inception and together with the series of PRIX catalogues, created a unique chronicle of new media practices.

The biggest and the most wide-ranging institution for new media art is ZKM (the Zentrum für Kunst und Technologie) in Karlsruhe, Germany. Launched in 1989 as the European Centre for new media

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60 Cadwallar, H. 2004. 'Arts Infrastructure.' In L. Kimbell (ed.) 2004. *New Media Art. Practice and Context in the UK 1994-2004*. London, Manchester: Arts Council of England and Cornerhouse Publications. p.108.

61 Ars Electronica, 2014. 'Ars Electronica Festival'. Online. Available at: <http://www.aec.at/festival/en/>. Accessed: January 15, 2014.

62 Ars Electronica, 2014. 'History'. Online. Available at: <http://www.aec.at/about/en/geschichte/>. Accessed: January 15, 2014.

63 Ars Electronica, 2014. 'About'. Online. Available at: <http://www.aec.at/about/en/geschichte/>. Accessed: January 15, 2014.

64 Ars Electronica, 2014. 'Futurelab'. Online. Available at: <http://www.aec.at/futurelab/en>. Accessed: January 15, 2014.

65 Ascott, R. 2003. *Telematic Embrace. Visionary Theories of Art, Technology and Consciousness*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 285.

66 Ars Electronica, 2014. 'Ars Electronica Prix'. Online. Available at: <http://www.aec.at/prix/en/>. Accessed: January 15, 2014.

research and production, ZKM is the first large-scale museum dedicated entirely to media art and one that became a paradigmatic new media institution.<sup>67</sup> ZKM played a crucial role in establishing emerging new media as a distinct artistic practice and defining the needs of new media from museological perspective, in terms of maintenance, archiving, education and technical support.<sup>68</sup> The institution combines research, production, presentation, documentation, archiving and collection as well as a critical evaluation of new media practices.<sup>69</sup> ZKM has at its disposal numerous resources and an extensive research environment to support artist-in-residence's development and production of new work,<sup>70</sup> and contributes – through its own publishing platform – to the history and theory of new media.<sup>71</sup>

Ars Electronica and ZKM are paradigmatic examples of new media institutions; their defining characteristics are hybridity and flexibility. Like the field of new media itself, they are multi-dimensional, networked, non-linear and interactive. They bring together and merge different functions and multiple models of art museum and gallery, science centre, technology lab, festival and studio within one complex. In this respect, they are, as described by Rectanus, 'meta-museums'; 'defined by two key processes: (a) their attempt to represent and mediate discourses of their constituent museums or institutes through networked communication, and through projects designed to create new modes of artistic communication linked to virtual communities: and (b) their adaptation to the technical characteristics of the technologies they exhibit'.<sup>72</sup>

The field of new media has contributed to the changes in traditional art institutions which were compelled to reconfigure around the new practices in order to accommodate the demands of new media production. Those new formats and models of working intersect with many postulates of new museology and institutional critique including closer collaborations between different departments, more varied presentation, distribution and interpretation platforms, and a flexible approach to programming, producing a variety of projects with the flexible timeframes required by research and experimentation. The field of new media has also developed its own institutional formats; many organisations, purposefully designed to support and present new media are, by necessity, flexible and hybrid structures, often combining different presentation platforms including galleries, festivals and labs. Focused on the process and experimentation, these institutions are concerned with facilitating cross-sector, multidisciplinary collaborations between artists, researchers, scientists, technicians, designers as well as traditional art partners (galleries, curators etc.). They also use hybrid presentation and distribution formats – workshops, festivals, events, exhibitions, conferences, publishing (online), broadcast – and run a variety of projects through different time frames including residencies and long term research projects.

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67 Murray, T. 2002. 'Digital Passage. The Rhizomatic Frontiers of the ZKM'. *Journal of Performance and Art*. 24:1. p. 115.

68 Weibel, P. 2009. 'Music, Machines, Media and the Museum'. *Organised Sound*. 14:3. p. 231.

69 Ibid., p. 232.

70 ZKM is divided into various institutes: Museum of Contemporary Art, Media Museum, Institute for Visual Media, Institute for Music and Acoustics, Institute for Media, Education and Economics, Film Institute. See ZKM, 2013. 'About ZKM'. Online. Available at: <http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/e/about>. Accessed: December 15, 2013.

71 ZKM publications are significant contributions to the history and theory of new media art, as well as contemporary art e.g. recent *Global Art and the Museum* book series edited by Hans Belting and Peter Weibel.

72 Rectanus, M. 2011. 'Globalization: Incorporating the Museum.' In Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*. p. 394.

### 1.1.3. Art institutions and the expediency of culture <sup>73</sup>

Changes in the way art institutions operate need be considered in a wider socio-political and economic context. Apart from critical reflection on the role of art institutions driven by artists, academics, curators and institutions themselves, as well as practical challenges and new presentation formats brought about by new artistic practices, transformations in institutional practice have been affected by wider changes in the way culture is produced, administered and distributed in contemporary society.

The concept of 'culture industry' provides a useful point of departure for this discussion. The term 'culture industry' has gained currency in academic as well as cultural policy language. However, the origin of the term reveals the contradictory logic, which underpins it and the processes it refers to. The term 'culture industry' was first used by Adorno and Horkheimer, as a critical shorthand to indicate that culture, once the space of freedom and autonomy had become a commodity, produced through standardized processes, subjected to the industrial forms of organization and production.<sup>74</sup> According to Horkheimer and Adorno, art is no longer an area of creative autonomy but, rather, is governed by the logic of the market although profit and commodity value are not the only factors driving culture industry:

'[...] ultimately, the culture industry no longer even needs to directly pursue everywhere the profit interests from which it originated. These interests have become objectified in its ideology and have been even made themselves independent of the compulsion to sell the cultural commodities which must be swallowed anyway. The culture industry turns into public relations, the manufacturing of "goodwill" per se, without regard for particular firms or saleable objects. Brought to bear is a general uncritical consensus, advertisements produced for the world, so that each product of the culture industry becomes its own advertisement.'<sup>75</sup>

At the core of Adorno and Horkheimer's fierce critique of the culture industry is not the use of culture as commodity but its role as PR machine, which manufactures 'goodwill' and serves as an 'advertisement for the world'. Adorno and Horkheimer's critique, though long since formulated still holds. The fact that the term, coined to express contempt and disapproval, and understood by its detractors to be inherently contradictory – culture cannot be *manufactured* in an industrialized manner – became adopted by the both policy makers and cultural institutions, is a case in point for Adorno and Horkheimer.

While it is important to note, that the use of culture as a PR tool is by no means a recent phenomenon – museums and art institutions have always been the instruments of social and cultural policy as well as tools for building national identity and cultivating citizenship<sup>76</sup> – recent decades have seen a more explicit instrumentalisation of culture. The term 'culture industries' entered the policy lexicon in the 1970s and 1980s, together with instrumental arguments for arts funding.<sup>77</sup> In the UK the Thatcherite era with its focus on privatization, and reduction of public expenditure saw a significant decrease in funding for

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<sup>73</sup> I am borrowing the term 'expediency of culture' from George Yudice's book *The Expediency of Culture. Uses of Culture in the Global Era*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>74</sup> See Adorno, T, Horkheimer, M. 1979. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: Verso. pp. 120-124.

<sup>75</sup> Adorno, T. 2001. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. Edited and with an Introduction by J.M. Bernstein. London: Routledge. p.100.

<sup>76</sup> See for example Duncan, C. 1995. *Civilising Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*. London: Routledge.

<sup>77</sup> Hartley, J. (ed.) 2005. *Creative Industries*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. p.13.

the arts.<sup>78</sup> With this adoption of a more market-driven economic policy, the cultural sector adopted the rules of the game and 'decided to emphasize the economic aspects of its activities and their alleged contribution to the wealth of the nation' as a survival strategy.<sup>79</sup> This trend continues through to the present day where cuts in arts funding and pressure to justify and account for public spending contribute to the ever increasing deployment of culture as PR tool in various areas of social life.

The Arts Council has embraced the economic arguments, advocating arts as *investment* which can produce returns in terms of jobs creation, tourism promotion and urban regeneration.<sup>80</sup> The urban regeneration argument resonated particularly strongly with authorities and businesses. In Western Europe and North America the shift from a production based economy to service, economy, with a concomitant removal of heavy industry and manufacturing to cheaper labour markets, was followed by a significant decline in many urban areas.<sup>81</sup> Many post-industrial cities have subsequently attempted to rebrand themselves as attractive places to live in order to attract tourism and financial investment, which could help to generate jobs and secure new income streams. Culture and entertainment are a key part of urban regeneration strategies, which frequently involve the creation of cultural districts (where artists' studios, galleries and independent art venues co-exists with cafes, bars and restaurants) and flagship cultural projects, such as iconic venues, which become destinations on cultural tourist trails.<sup>82</sup>

In the UK, Liverpool is frequently discussed as a successful example of culture-led urban regeneration. From being a 19<sup>th</sup> century port city of global importance and the second city in the UK, Liverpool fell into economic and social decline in 1970s-80s.<sup>83</sup> With the docks and manufacturing industry declining and with the resulting enormous loss of jobs the city lost half of its population.<sup>84</sup> Despite its decline, Liverpool enjoyed a vibrant cultural life and is second to London in terms of cultural infrastructure and the number of museums, galleries, theatres and music venues.<sup>85</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that when plans for the city's regeneration were drawn up culture was a key aspect of the renewal strategy.<sup>86</sup>

Urban development in Liverpool started in 1981 with the Merseyside Development Corporation (MCD) regeneration of the docks. During the 80s the derelict dock buildings and warehouses were

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78 Belfiore, E. 2002. 'Art as a Means of Alleviating Social Exclusion: Does it Really Work? A Critique of Instrumental Cultural Policies and Social Impact Studies in the UK'. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*. 8:1. Online. Available through the University of Liverpool Library web site at: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/library/>. Accessed: November 15, 2013. p. 94.

79 Ibid., pp. 94-95.

80 Ibid., p. 95.

81 Evans, G. 2001. *Cultural Planning. An Urban Renaissance?* New York: Routledge. p. 211.

82 Ibid., p. 213.

83 See Bolland, P. 2008. 'The Construction of Images of People and Place: Labelling Liverpool and Stereotyping Scousers'. *Cities*. 25: 6. pp. 355-356.

84 As Bolland states: 'the dock workforce shrank from over 50,000 to just 1,611, the manufacturing sector haemorrhaged 95,000 jobs (in excess of 50 per cent)'. Bolland, P. 2013. 'Sexing up the City in the International Beauty Contest: the Performative Nature of Spatial Planning and the Fictive Spectacle of Place Branding'. *Town Planning Review*. 84: 2. p. 255.

85 On the history of Liverpool's cultural scene See Knifton, R., Grunenberg, C. (eds.) 2007. *Centre of the Creative Universe: Liverpool and the Avant-Garde*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

86 It is interesting to note that Liverpool has a long history of deploying culture to fix social problems. The oldest gallery in town, Walker Gallery was set up as part of a 'temperance campaign' for Liverpool, which in the 19th century was struggling with effects of quick industrialisation and urbanisation. See MacLeod, S. 2007. 'Occupying the Architecture of the Gallery. Spatial, Social and Professional Change at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 1877-1933'. In S. MacLeod at al, 2007. *Museum Revolutions. How Museums Change and are Changed*. London: Routledge. pp. 72-87.

transformed into apartments, bars and cafes. A cultural tourist trail was begun with Tate Liverpool (opened 1988) and Maritime Museum (moved into renovated dock D in 1986). The arrival of the Tate was one of the most significant aspects of the Dock regeneration, but also one that turned out to be the most controversial. Some saw the Tate 'as sort of horse of Troy, sheltering officials sent by the right-wing government in London for the conquest of left-wing Liverpool'<sup>87</sup> and an attempt to neutralise 'problems presented by the underclass in contemporary societies'.<sup>88</sup> The critique also focused on Tate as an institution based on a 'metropolitan' model, which had been 'airlifted into the city'.<sup>89</sup> Despite such controversies and the initially hostile reception of the Tate, the waterfront development was deemed to be a success and it provided City Council with a proof of the 'regenerative potential of the arts'.<sup>90</sup> Further stages of the city's cultural regeneration included the arrival of the FACT gallery in Ropewalks Square (2003), the founding of Liverpool Biennale (2003). These regenerative strategies all culminated in Liverpool securing the title of European Capital of Culture for 2008, which brought a significant influx of funding.

European Capital of Culture (ECoC) enabled local stakeholders to re-brand Liverpool as 'cultural city'.<sup>91</sup> Reports show the positive impact of the ECoC on Liverpool in economic terms as well as in terms of the 'enhancement of the image of the city'; media coverage of the city improved, focusing on positive news stories on art and culture, rather than negative social issues.<sup>92</sup> Boland compares the euphoric assessments of the impact of the European Capital of Culture and the 'image renaissance' with the social and economic reality of the city concluding:

'It appears Liverpool has experienced a sexy image make-over, enabling the city to compete in the international beauty contest for inward investment, cultural tourism and the creative classes, with the Liverpool brand deemed to be 'global', 'international' and 'world class' [...] moreover, the 'Liverpool model' is informing a wider narrative of how British cities can develop and respond to the continued challenges of deindustrialisation and global competition.'<sup>93</sup>

However, as Boland argues, the statistics reveal something very different – that Liverpool is a highly deprived and polarised city.<sup>94</sup> The regeneration was successful as a marketing campaign, but has little to do with the reality of the city, and is a case of the 'fictive spectacle of city branding'.<sup>95</sup>

Putting aside the real effects, or lack of thereof, of culture-led regeneration in Liverpool, it is without doubt that art institutions such as the Tate, FACT and the Liverpool Biennale have played a signifi-

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87 Lorente, P. (ed.) 1996. *The Role of Museums and the Arts in the Urban Regeneration of Liverpool*. Leicester: University of Leicester. p. 3.

88 Harris, J. quoted in Barker, E. 1999. 'The Museum in the Community: the New Tates.' In E. Barker (ed.) 1999. *Contemporary Cultures of Display*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press in association with The Open University. p. 185.

89 Dodds, P. quoted in Barker, 'The Museum in the Community.' p. 185.

90 Evans, R. 1996. Liverpool's Urban Regeneration Initiatives and the Arts: a Review of Policy Development and Strategic Issues.' In Lorente, *The Role of Museums*. p. 10.

91 Boland, 'Sexing up the City.' p. 262.

92 Garcia, B. at al. quoted in Boland, 'Sexing up the City.' p. 262. According to a report, commissioned by Liverpool City Council, the hosting of ECoC by Liverpool generated 15 million visitors, economic impact of £800 million and £200 million global media value (Garcia, B. at al. 2010. *Creating an Impact: Liverpool's Experience as European Capital of Culture*. Liverpool: University of Liverpool).

93 Boland, 'Sexing up the City.' p. 262.

94 Boland quotes The Government Indices of Multiple Deprivation according to which in 2007 Liverpool was the most deprived local authority in England. See Boland, 'Sexing up the city.' p. 265.

95 Boland, 'Sexing up the City.' 267.

cant role in the process of city re-branding. As such, it is important to question the effect that this conception of art institutions as drivers of social and economic regeneration has upon the way in which they operate.

One effect is the growing expectation that art institutions assume a strong social responsibility, and through various community and educational projects to help in the social regeneration of the city. The New Right policies of 1980s in the UK attempted to reduce state's financial involvement in community welfare and move the responsibility towards voluntary sector, emphasising the need for community self-reliance.<sup>96</sup> Culture and art institutions became important actors in community development. This has been expressed in many policy documents, which ask museums to 'foster social capital'.<sup>97</sup> As a response to these policy shifts art institutions were compelled to develop strong educational and community programmes, ranging from more traditional educational formats, like workshops through to the more experimental such as involving communities in a variety of artistic projects (as collaborators, consultants or project organisers).

Aside from the 'social turn' within art institutions, the instrumental approach to culture, understood as driver of economic and social capital accumulation in the global market, led to the commercialisation of museums and galleries' operations. Institutions merged community outreach with the logic of show business, focused on entertainment and audience numbers. Vivant argues that the shift towards an entrepreneurial museum occurred concurrently with the entrepreneurial shift in the management of cities, in the 1980s, when UK and US turned to a neoliberal economy:

'Just as cities began to compete to attract investors and tourists, museums began to compete for the best reputation and the highest number of visitors and patrons. This competitive shift has been more than an ideological turn; several changes, such as the globalisation of visitors, funds and artists flows, have led to this new business-model management of museums [...] Faced with a growing reliance on fundraising and an endowment as well as their progressive adoption of a business-model management, museums are increasingly appointing executives with a management background instead of an art history one. These managers bring a corporate culture to the museum, a culture this is clearly revealed by the incorporation of business narratives in the museum's discourse. Terms such as "accountability", "development strategies", "assessment" and "box office" refer to and reflect the new constraints and duties of these managers.'<sup>98</sup>

Entrepreneurial museums employ new managers, seek corporate funding, expand their commercial outputs, and create blockbuster shows. A key example of the commercialisation and corporatisation of museum culture, accompanying an instrumental deployment of its operations towards social and economic revitalisation, is the Guggenheim museum. Guggenheim Bilbao (opened in 1997) is probably the most often quoted example of a flagship cultural institution, planned as a driver of regeneration. Housed in an iconic building, designed by Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Bilbao turned the declining city into prime tourist destination. The 'Bilbao effect' became a success story of cultural led regeneration and a strong argument for the crucial role of art venues as drivers of the process.<sup>99</sup> However, as critics point out, the operations of Guggenheim museum – running a number of

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96 Crooke, E. 2011. 'Museums and Community.' In: Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies*. p. 180.

97 Ibid., p. 180.

98 Vivant, E. 2011. 'Who Brands Whom? The Role of Local Authorities in the Branching of Art Museums.' *Town Planning Review*. 82:1. p. 101.

99 See Plaza, A. 2000. 'Evaluating the Influence of a Large Cultural Artefact on Tourism: the Guggenheim Museum. Bilbao Case.' *Urban Affairs Quarterly*. 36: 2. pp. 264–274.

franchises and initiative around the world, often funded by corporate partners<sup>100</sup> – has become an epitome of the process of corporatisation of museums; ‘their transformation from public educational institutions into corporate entertainment complexes.’<sup>101</sup>

#### 1.1.4. Summary

This first half of the literature review has engaged three key drivers of transformations occurring within arts institutions over the past 50 years. It has chronicled the critical debate surrounding the role and shape of art institutions from institutional critique, which brought critical attention to the politics and practice of art institution, through new museology which engaged a systematic scrutiny of different aspects of museums operations and marked a paradigm shift towards more socially inclusive and socially responsive institutions, to the most recent example of new institutionalism, which reflects various changes in artistic and curatorial practice and has proposed new models for the art institutions.

The second important aspect of the transformation of contemporary art institutions covered by this review, has been the practical challenges to traditional art institutions and the new models of institutional practice that have been brought about by new media; this has included a discussion of the demands of new media production, new presentation formats such as labs and festivals as well as new models of institutions, developed to accommodate the needs of new media practices (Ars Electronica and ZKM).

The third part of the review has highlighted the socio-economic and political factors, which have shaped the operations of art institutions, particularly the instrumentalising approach to culture. Culture understood as a tool to alleviate social and economic ills, and expected to deliver social outcomes and economic growth has a bearing on the functioning of art institutions which begin to merge community outreach with a more entrepreneurial and market driven institutional practice.

These topics and discussion recalls Anderson’s series of oppositions regarding the paradigm shift between the ‘traditional’ and ‘reinvented’ museum.<sup>102</sup> According to Anderson, art institutions have shifted from *elitist* to *equitable*, *exclusive*, to *inclusive*; in institutional priorities from *collection driven* to *audience focused*, from *open* to *public* to *visitor oriented*; in terms of management strategies from *isolated* and *insular* to *participant in the marketplace*, from *selling* to *marketing*, from *cautious*, to *informed risk taker*, from *static role* to *strategic positioning*, from *fund development* to *entrepreneurial*.<sup>103</sup>

As has been illustrated above, new pairings with respect to the influence of new media can also be added. New media contributed to a change in institutional form and practice from *static* to *dynamic*

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100 Guggenheim has a series of franchises : in Venice, Bilbao, the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin and Abu Dhabi (under development) – and runs a number of international initiatives funded by corporate partners (Guggenheim Lab New York-Berlin-Mumbai, and Guggenheim UBS Map Global Art Initiative South and Southeast Asia Latin America, Middle East and North Africa. See Guggenheim, 2013. ‘Guggenheim Foundation’. Online. Available at: <http://www.guggenheim.org/guggenheim-foundation>. Accessed: June 20, 2013.

101 Fraser, A. 2006. ‘Isn’t this a Wonderful Place. A Tour of a Tour of the Guggenheim Bilbao’. In I. Karp et al. 2006. *Museum Frictions. Public Cultures/Global Transformations*. Durham and London: Duke University Press. p. 140.

102 Anderson, G. 2004. *Reinventing the Museum: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Paradigm Shift*. Walnut Creek, Calif: AltaMira Press. p. 1.

103 Ibid., p. 1-2.



*and flexible*, from a *closed* to an *open* system, from the institution being a *place* to being a *network*, from it being *single purpose* to a *multifunctional and hybrid* form, from *customary* ideas of the art object to *experimental* modes of practice. In the second part of the literature review, we can begin to see how these changes are both reflected in and effected by new forms of curatorial practice.

## 1.2. Changes in curatorial practice

The critical reflection on art institutions, and changing models of their operations has been accompanied by a debate about curatorial practice. This part of the literature and contextual review looks at examples of new curatorial approaches which have emerged within as well as outside institutions as a response to transformations in contemporary art, particularly the surge of socially engaged art as well as changes in artistic practices brought about by new media, in order to provide a framework for the analysis of FACT's curatorial practice.

As noted in the definition section of this thesis (Introduction chapter) curatorial practice has changed considerably in the recent decades, with the most significant shift in the roles of the curator taking place in the decade of 1990s. The role of curator shifted from being focused predominantly on the presentation of artists' work (organising exhibitions, presenting already existing work) towards taking an active part in the process of making artwork, becoming a co-author and co-producer of the work:

'The curator is now often implicated in the production of the work, working closely with the artist as commissioner or enabler, and is concerned with the whole physical and intellectual experience of an exhibition or offsite project. This is a very different role from that of the art historian or scholarly curator, whose principal task has been to research the history of particular artistic movement or moments, to select key examples of an artist's work, and to present this research within conventions of a historical presentation.'<sup>104</sup>

The factors contributing to the transformations of the role of the curator and of curatorial practice are manifold with changes in artistic practices as well as the development of new presentation formats and platforms playing a central role. New media art, socially engaged, context responsive practices brought challenges to the traditional curatorial approaches and required new ways of working. Additionally, many new curatorial approaches have developed outside, or on the peripheries of art institutions, in festivals, biennials as well as in educational or engagement strands of institutional programming. Those strands of institutional operations, originally focused around and subservient to the main exhibition programming have gained in significance and developed new ways of working and these have, in turn, influenced the mainstream of institutional praxis. Contributing to the development of those originally more peripheral, now increasingly significant, strands of museums and galleries programmes is the proliferation of socially engaged, educational practices that do not fit the usual exhibition format, and wider social turn within art institutions, as discussed in the first part of the contextual review.

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104 Gladlowe, T. quoted in Cook, S. 2008. 'Immateriality and Its Discontents. An Overview of Main Models and Issues for Curating New Media.' In Paul, *New Media in the White Cube*. p. 28.

### 1.2.1. Context-responsive curating

'Responsive', or 'context-responsive' curating is an approach, which emerged alongside the growing body of context-specific and socially engaged practices.<sup>105</sup> Context-responsive curatorial practice can be defined as that which encourages and supports artistic responses to specific social, cultural, political and geographic (locational) contexts. Linked to a theoretical shift in the notion of 'site', the term 'context-specific' rather than 'site-specific' indicates an expanded concept of site-specificity, in which the traditional phenomenological understanding of the place as physical arena has been re-defined as site 'constituted through social, economic and political processes'.<sup>106</sup>

Context-responsive curating developed predominantly beyond institutions; within festivals, biennales, art agencies but also within collaboration and engagement departments of art institutions. Context-responsive approaches are most often expressed within the biennial format as the biennial epitomises contemporary art's strive for 'glocality' – bridging the local, emplaced context of the biennial with global context of the nomadic, international art world.<sup>107</sup> Biennials are often perceived as promotional tools for the city and as drivers of cultural tourism and economic regeneration. With promotional and regeneration agendas in mind, biennials attempt both to showcase the uniqueness of their host cities and to place them on the international art map.<sup>108</sup> As such, biennials have become hubs for a range of practices, which take as their starting point the specificity of the context, and have created operational infrastructure for the production and dissemination of context-responsive practices.

Since its arrival in 1999, the Liverpool Biennial has commissioned and presented an impressive body of work in terms of its variety, scale and ambition. Some of the most interesting and iconic work associated with the Biennial has been created as a direct response to the city of Liverpool. Starting with spectacular commissions such as Richard Wilson's giant revolving façade (*Turning Place Over*, 2007-2011) Ttasorous Bashi's fully functioning hotel room constructed around the monument of Queen Victoria on one of the city's squares (*Villa Victoria*, 2002) and Atelier Bow Wow open air theatre (on Renshaw Street, 2008) through countless more subtle interventions in the fabric of the city, temporary installations and the reclaiming of foreclosed buildings or the city's landmarks as exhibition spaces (e.g. Hotel Europa shops on Renshaw Street in 2010; the Cunard building in 2012; The Old Blind School in 2014) the Biennial has made its mark on the city, both physically and symbolically.

The focus on the city and the context-responsive curatorial approach is linked to the Biennial's strong regeneration agenda. Programmes such as *Art for Places* and *On the Street* have strategically targeted some of the deprived areas of the city (such as Anfield) in an attempt to 'improve the quality of public places' and 'create links with their immediate communities'.<sup>109</sup> One of Liverpool Biennial projects, which responded very directly to the challenges faced by some of the city's disenfranchised

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105 The term 'context-responsive' as such is not established in the curatorial literature. However, it is used by De Appel to describe the focus of its Curatorial Programme as: 'curating in the expanded field, which is investigated through the polarity between "free-lance" and "institutional" curating and the notion of "context-responsive" curating'. De Appel, 2012. 'History of De Appel Curatorial Programme'. Online. Available at: <http://www.deappel.nl/cp/>. Accessed: March 15, 2012.

106 Kwon, *One Place After Another*. p. 3.

107 Furnesvik, E. 2003. 'Fantom Pains. Momemtun – Nordic Festival of Contemporary Art (1998 and 2000) and the Johannesburg Biennale (1995 and 1997)'. In J. Ekeberg (ed.) 2003. *New Institutionalism*. Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway. p. 22.

108 Ibid., pp. 22-23.

109 Liverpool Biennial 2012, 'Art for Places'. Online. Available at: <http://www.biennial.com/art-for-places>. Accessed: December 20, 2012.

areas is *2 Up 2 Down* (2010-2012). Artist Jeanne van Heeswijk worked for over two years (in the run up to 2012 Biennial) with Anfield communities and local co-operative organisation to redesign and re-use an empty property including old bakery as a shop, co-operative bakery and a community centre. The Bakery, located in the middle of an area, where hundreds of homes have been cleared for demolition, became a symbol of 'community resilience', as the Biennial publicity announced.<sup>110</sup> *2 Up 2 Down* is a paradigmatic example of the context-responsive curatorial approach and the current Liverpool Biennial director Sally Tallant, mentions the project as comprising all the qualities of what Biennial is trying to achieve in terms of 'embedding' art in the city.<sup>111</sup>

However, the project also revealed the challenges of a context-responsive approach and way of working. The debate, which took place in the Bakery few months prior to the opening of the Biennial as well as a tour of Anfield, which was offered as part of the Biennial 2012 highlighted the complexities of factors that constitute the 'context', and challenges that artists and curators face when working in response to the city, especially within a regeneration framework.<sup>112</sup> Some of the voices from the local audience participating in the debate at the Bakery, were critical of the assumption that the area needed to be 'regenerated' through art projects or otherwise. Two main problems were pointed out: first, what seemed to be implicated in the regeneration logic was that somehow the residents were 'the problem' and second, the regeneration would force many of them out of their homes.<sup>113</sup>

Critical voices were also directed at the Biennial, pointing out the fact that this kind of 'community resilience' projects that Biennial and Heeswijk were doing had already been going on for a long time in Anfield and that the Biennial 'gets the credit' for the process initiated by the community a long time before it appeared on the scene.<sup>114</sup> It could be argued that the project undermined the agency of the community, presenting the artist/institution as the ones 'empowered' who help to empower others (perhaps even against their will). The bus trip to Anfield, offered as part of the Biennial (September 2012) further reinforced the impression of the lack of agency of the local communities. The audience was taken on an emotional journey; driven through strange land of deprivation, feeling sorry for the inhabitants and their helplessness.<sup>115</sup>

The discussion around *2 Up 2 Down* corroborates a common criticism of biennials – which can also be applied more generally to context-specific curating. Critics point out that biennials may imply and invite a 'pseudo-anthropological' mode of engagement whereby 'the artist is typically an outsider who has the institutionally sanctioned authority to engage the locale in the production of their (self) representation'.<sup>116</sup> As Hall Foster argues, 'such mapping may thus confirm rather than contest the authority of mapper over a site in a way that reduces the desired exchange of dialogical fieldwork'.<sup>117</sup> Supporting a range of artistic practices, that respond to certain place (context) – understood as

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110 Liverpool Biennial, 2012. '2 Up 2 Down.' Online. Available at: <http://www.biennial.com/events/2up-2-down---learn-more-about-the-project>. Accessed: December 20, 2012.

111 Tallant, S. 2012. Interviewed by the author. February 1.

112 The debate 'Around Ours' with artist Jeanne van Heeswijk and journalist Owen Hatherley took place in Anfield Bakery on July 11 2012.

113 Krzemien Barkley, A. 2012. 'Notes from the Debate Around Ours', Anfield Bakery, July 11.'

114 Ibid.

115 See Liverpool Biennial, 2012. 'Anfield Tour Script'. [PDF]. Online. Available at: [http://www.jeanetworks.net/files/blg/i\\_0052/The\\_Anfield\\_Home\\_Tour\\_script\\_final\\_small.pdf](http://www.jeanetworks.net/files/blg/i_0052/The_Anfield_Home_Tour_script_final_small.pdf). Accessed: June 15, 2013.

116 Foster, H. 1996. *The Return of the Real. Art and Theory at the End of the Century*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. p. 197.

117 Ibid., p. 197.

constituted through socio-political and economic processes – context-responsive curatorial approaches, have placed emphasis on the importance of working in an embedded way, resisting the nomadism of much of contemporary art. However, they also revealed the complexities of such artistic ‘mapping’ of places, and posed further questions about the models and methods of working, which can facilitate a meaningful response to the context:

‘How can curators support artistic engagements with places which can be seen to be “constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations”? [...] How do such works coalesce to form a meaningful “exhibition” for the biennial visitor when the experience of place itself is an event in progress?’<sup>118</sup>

### 1.2.2. Durational approach

Indeed, it is the notion of place as ‘event’ – an evolving and dynamic time-space – that seems to be the key when considering curatorial dilemmas with facilitating the context-specific practices discussed above. The factor of time is a significant aspect of artistic practice, especially so in process driven, participatory, community based, or context-specific work. Recognising the importance of the different timeframes through which projects might develop, curators have adopted durational ways of working to accommodate this need for the time element. Durational approaches have been manifested predominantly in the context of site specific, place-based commissioning where work is developed in a cumulative way over a long period, thereby evolving a relationship with a specific context, community or a group of people, who participate in the creation, or public manifestation, of the work.<sup>119</sup>

Curator-producers working in this manner operate from an embedded position and are actively involved in the artistic process, as well as in negotiating the context as a space for artistic exchange.<sup>120</sup> The duration is essential as it is part of the context, and the understanding of site, and public space which is not formed and static, but dynamic and evolving.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, the communities are understood not as pre-formed but, rather, as dynamic entities; according to Doherty and O’Neil a ‘durational approach to events and projects seems to allow for the formation, dispersal and reformation of temporary active communities.’<sup>122</sup>

Miwon Kwon in her influential book *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, describes, based on her case study of the public art project *Culture in Action*, four types of communities and different kinds of interactions between the artist(s) and their respective communities.<sup>123</sup> The first of such categories proposed by Kwon is the ‘Community of Mythic Unity’, which could be described as a ‘utopian’ notion of community, envisaged as one united by a common denominator

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118 Doherty, C. 2007. ‘Curating Wrong Places...Or Where Have All the Penguins Gone?’ In P. O’Neill (ed.) 2007. *Curating Subjects*. London: Open Editions. p. 103.

119 Cook, S., Krzemien-Barkley, A. 2014. ‘The Digital Arts In and Out of the Institution – Where to Now?’. In Paul, C. (ed.) *A Companion to Digital Art*. London: Blackwell Publishers (forthcoming).

120 O’Neill, P., Doherty, C (eds.) 2011. *Locating the Producers. Durational Approaches to Public Art*. Amsterdam: Antennae Valiz. pp. 3-4.

121 Ibid., pp. 4-7.

122 Ibid., pp. 9-10.

123 *Culture in Action* was a series of significant public art commissions by Sculpture Chicago, curated by Mary Jane Jacob, which took place between 1991-1993 in Chicago. It is often considered a groundbreaking experiment that redefined the notion of public art. See Jacob, M.J. at al. 1995. *Culture in Action. A Public Art Program of Sculpture Chicago*. Seattle: Bay Press.

(such as gender), to which a set of general attributes and characteristics are ascribed. According to Kwon, art projects based on this general unifying notion of community risk irrelevance as all other differences (individual, cultural, ethnic etc.) are ignored, or neutralised, at best.<sup>124</sup>

Next, Kwon distinguishes communities with already existing clearly defined identities as 'Sited Communities'. According to Kwon, collaborations with these communities often risk being predictable; as the community might either be invited to the project as it 'fits the bill' of an already conceptualized work that an artists wishes to realise, or, if the project is centred around the particular community, the focus and the nature of the project may be prescribed by the set of issues central to the community. In this scenario, curator and art institution often act as 'matchmakers' between an artist and a community, anticipating an artist's interest and the kind of project that may result from the collaboration, sometimes stereotyping the identities of the community and the artist in the process and leading to a superficial collaboration which fits with already established agendas.<sup>125</sup>

The third type of community, discussed by Kwon, are 'Invented Communities (temporary)'; 'newly constituted and rendered operational through the coordination of the artwork itself'.<sup>126</sup> Such communities are often involved in activities or events, which lead towards, or constitute, the artwork, an important aspect of which is the forming of the community itself. According to Kwon, those communities are usually short lived as they depend, conceptually and financially, on the project and sponsoring institution. The fourth model of community interaction, 'Invented communities (ongoing)', is a development of the third model and it refers to a community formed for the purpose of and during the making of the artwork, but which remains operational beyond the duration of the project and its institutional support.<sup>127</sup>

As an example of this type of community engagement, and the most successful in the *Culture in Action* in terms of meeting the declarations of its organisers, according to Kwon, were: a community garden and video production initiative. The community garden, initiated by artistic collective HaHa and Flood, was set up to grow food that was later distributed to AIDS sufferers. The garden was set up in a storefront space, which also become a community centre for AIDS education – with workshops, lectures and special events organised. The second project, *Street Level Video* was collaboration between artist Mongalo Ovalle and teenagers from his Latino neighbourhood in Chicago's West Side, during which the teenagers involved produced videos relating to their lives.<sup>128</sup> *Street Level Video* still functions (renamed as *Street Level Youth Media*); soon after the end of *Culture in Action* (1993) young people took over the responsibility of running the initiative.<sup>129</sup>

According to Kwon the community garden and *Street Level Video* were the most successful as they contributed to the process of community development in their respective contexts. What gave them their sustainability is 'the artist's intimate and direct knowledge of their respective neighbourhoods',<sup>130</sup> which grew out of sustained engagement with the context. Kwon sees the duration, and 'an intense engagement with the people of the site, involving direct communication and interaction over an

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124 Kwon, *One Place After Another*. p. 119.

125 Ibid., p. 126.

126 Ibid., p. 126.

127 Ibid., p. 130.

128 Ibid., pp. 131-132.

129 See Street Level Youth Media, 2013. 'Home.' Online. Available at: <http://www.street-level.org/>. Accessed: June 20, 2013.

130 Kwon, *One Place After Another*. p. 134.

extended period of time' as the key aspect of the 'ethics' of socially responsible art.<sup>131</sup> Thus, a durational way of working resists the 'pseudo-ethnographic' approach to site based commissioning and the 'curator/artist -nomad' model of working whereby artist and curator are 'parachuted' in to work with communities or sites on a short-term basis.<sup>132</sup>

According to Doherty and O'Neill, durational projects could be considered as 'discursive exhibitions' that evolve over time but instead of prioritising the moment of display, or the event of exhibition, they allow for open-ended, cumulative processes of engagement.<sup>133</sup> This creates the possibility of a different understanding of the concept of participation;

'We could move away from an abstracted idea of participation as event-based, experienced *en masse* – towards something ongoing, experienced individually, sometimes discordantly, which is enacted by us as citizens. In this sense, durational commissioning processes that employ co-productive and socially-engaged modes of operation move away from the spectacularised mode of social relations, [...] in which shared experience is atomised and consumption is undertaken without agency to create a false togetherness.'<sup>134</sup>

One example of durational way of working in a place-based context, which is a basis of institutional operations, discussed by Doherty and O'Neill, is Grizedale Arts; a commissioning agency and residency programme based in Lawson Park farm house in the Lake District. Originally Grizedale Society' Sculpture Project<sup>135</sup> invited artists to make sculptural and land art works that responded to the location. Currently Grizedale Arts is a strongly focused curatorial project of on-going programme of events, artists' residencies and community activities, that encourages artists 'to work amid the complexities of a specific rural location'.<sup>136</sup>

The Grizedale activities concentrate on the rural context, producing works and situations, which in one way or another involve the local residents. The projects range from site-specific installations, performances, fairs, talks, discussions, country shows and markets amongst others.<sup>137</sup> At the centre of Grizedale's work is the 'cumulative residential model', which has gradually generated a large network of artists – over two hundred, many international – with whom Grizedale collaborates with on a regular basis.<sup>138</sup> There are six residencies per year for which the artists are chosen through an annual open residency call. After the residency period, artists are often invited to return to Grizedale to contribute to the current programme of activities.

The residencies are not production-lead, but rather the process is guided by the focus on community and the specificity of the local context, with which the artists are encouraged to engage with

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131 Ibid., pp. 81-82.

132 O'Neill, P., Doherty, C. 2011. 'Introduction. Locating the Producers.' In O'Neill, Doherty, *Locating the Producers*. p. 4.

133 Ibid., p. 14.

134 Ibid., p. 9.

135 Grizedale Society' Sculpture Project was set up in 1977, funded initially by Northern Arts and the Forestry Commission.

136 O'Neill, P. 2011. 'Creative Egremont. A Public Art Strategy for Egremont Cumbria, UK. Grizedale Arts.' In O'Neill, Doherty, *Locating the Producers*. p. 84.

137 See Grizedale Arts, 2013. 'Projects.' Online. Available at: <http://www.grizedale.org/projects/>. Accessed: December 20, 2013.

138 O'Neill, 'Creative Egremont.' p. 84.

on a long-term basis.<sup>139</sup> According to Frogget et al. study of Grizedale, its embeddedness in the context, to which it responds with particular attention to the needs of the local communities, is the key principle underpinning the agency's operations.<sup>140</sup> As such, Grizedale is an interesting model of an institution strongly focused on facilitating a meaningful engagement and response to the context – social and locational – in which the durational cumulative model of working is a key strategy for developing an embedded and sustained relationship with the local context and its complexities.

While the examples discussed above indicate that durational ways of working are conducive to developing a sustained relationship with social and locational contexts, and therefore can be deployed in order to facilitate socially engaged, context-specific artistic practices, some critics point out that the duration can not be considered a silver bullet to the challenges of artistic engagement with the complexities of social realities. According to Beech, the issue with 'duration as ideology' is that it is 'presented as solution for art's social contradiction, whereas the only viable solution must be to problematise time for art.'<sup>141</sup> Beech goes on to point out that duration posited as an ideological solution sets up a binary opposition between 'duration' (equated with 'ethical') and the 'short-lived'. He argues that 'time should not be managed and deployed by artists according to a single ahistorical principle that is meant to be true no matter what the circumstance. Different conjunctures will call for different qualities as well as quantities of time. Pace must be adjusted not fixed according to an ideological imperative.'<sup>142</sup>

### 1.2.3. Collaboration in curating

Reviewing the curatorial literature and trying to identify curatorial approaches and ways of working which have developed as a response to changes in artistic practices, particularly those brought about by socially engaged and new media, a strong tendency towards collaborative ways of working within contemporary curating is evident. There are various factors contributing to the growing significance of collaborative models of curatorial practice including the rise of large-scale exhibitions, new ways of working brought about by new media, as well as a wider turn to collaborative, participatory and self-organised models of artistic practices in contemporary art.<sup>143</sup>

Collaborative curatorial practice has become a characteristic of large-scale international exhibitions. On the one hand, as O'Neill notes, the large scale exhibitions, 'continued to mobilize an expanded, centralized position for the figure of the curator', on the other however, 'there has been a shift away from the "single-author" curatorial model, gradually moving towards more collaborative, discursive and collective models of curating.'<sup>144</sup> One of the reasons for the shift within large-scale exhibitions was the fact that they require 'access to wider network of artistic and cultural practices' in order to sustain an inclusive character of this presentation model.<sup>145</sup>

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139 Ibid., pp. 84-86.

140 Frogget, L. et al. 2011. *New Model Visual Arts Organisations & Social Engagement*. Preston: University of Central Lancashire. p. 66.

141 Beech, D. 2012. 'The Ideology of Duration in the Dematerialised Monument. Art, Sites, Publics and Time.' In O'Neill, Doherty, *Locating the Producers*. p. 325.

142 Ibid., p. 325.

143 O'Neill, P. 2010. 'Beyond the Group Practice'. *Manifesta Journal*. Vol. 8. p. 42.

144 Ibid., p. 43.

145 Ibid., p. 43.

This attempt to democratise artistic production and presentation is a significant motivation behind the move towards a collaborative practice in general. As Arriola argues 'the assumption was that a group of voices can both democratize the artists' access to the so-called mainstream and pluralize the geographic, aesthetic and political points of view from which to put into perspective contemporary artistic production'.<sup>146</sup> Collective curatorial work allows for a pooling together of knowledge, expertise and ideas and it is also a good way of combining resources (financial, and manpower) in harder economic times. As such, collaboration between institutions on co-commissioning of new work is an increasingly common practice.

There are various different models of collaborative curatorial practice. O'Neill discusses three approaches to group curating, especially within large-scale exhibitions. The first model, which O'Neill calls 'curating curators' is exemplified by the Documenta 11, in which artistic director, Okwui Enzweor invited a team of international curators, who together formed a curatorial 'think tank [...] to develop the concept and content of the exhibition under his direction, and to provide contextual texts'.<sup>147</sup> In contrast to this model O'Neill discusses an approach of 'multiple authorship' – exemplified by the curatorial model of Manifesta – in which a group of 'high profile curators (generally from divergent locations and perspectives, often unknown to each other)' is brought together to 'work collaboratively on a single exhibition in a selected European city/region, with an overarching political agenda'.<sup>148</sup> The third way of working is exemplified by the strategy of Francesco Bonami, curator of the 50th Venice Biennale (2003) who invited international curators to curate their own exhibitions within his 'exhibition-event'.<sup>149</sup> This concept of the exhibition, as Bonami argued, replaced an idea of an exhibition as a 'single narrative' and presented a 'plurality of curatorial visions'.<sup>150</sup>

Curatorial collaborations not only involve curators working together, as discussed above, but can equally involve curators working with artists, or artists working together as curators, as well as curators and/or artists working with audiences, participants, or communities on the development of an exhibition or a project. Many examples of such collaborations can be cited. Artists collective Raqs Media Collective, invited to curate an exhibition (*The Rest for Now*) for Manifesta 7 (2008), worked not only as a curatorial team in developing ideas for the exhibition, but they also invited a number of artists to respond to the initial curatorial concepts and co-define, through collaborative exchanges, the exhibition framework.<sup>151</sup>

Grizedale Arts, discussed previously, is also as an example of a collaborative curatorial practice, involving artists and curators, as well as audiences, in which different projects are developed through ongoing curatorial discussions between Grizedale curators and the network of artists associated with the organisation. This cumulative collaborative model of working is underpinned by a sustained engagement with the local context and ongoing debates with the local community. Grizedale can be also used as an example of how collaborative curatorial models of working reflect a wider turn to collaborative and participatory practices in contemporary art, particularly – in case of Grizedale – process-oriented socially engaged practices.

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146 Arriola, M. 2010. 'Towards a Ghostly Agency: a Few Speculations on Collaborative and Collective Curating'. *Manifesta Journal*. Vol. 8. p. 3.

147 O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating*. p. 79.

148 Ibid., p. 79.

149 Ibid., p. 80.

150 Bonami, F. quoted in O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating*. p. 80.

151 See Raqs Media Collective. 2010. 'Additions, Subtractions: On Collectives and Collectivities'. *Manifesta Journal*. Vol. 8. pp. 5-13.



Collective curatorial models of working have also been developed as a response to the new ways of working brought about by new media. Collaboration is a common means of operation for new media artists, often for pragmatic reasons due to the variety of skills sets required to produce technologically complex work.<sup>152</sup> The models of working developed in media labs, festivals, or new media institutions are usually very collaborative, including curators and artists, programmers, technicians working together on the different aspects of a project in development and in production.<sup>153</sup>

Sarah Cook discussed three models of curatorial practice within new media and corresponding models of exhibitions which have developed to accommodate the characteristics of new media art production. These models are the 'iterative' (within the 'iterative' exhibition, a travelling exhibition which changes with each iteration); the 'modular' (within the 'modular' exhibition, consisting of different elements and 'modules', including workshops, talks, performances as well as exhibition) and the 'distributed' curatorial model (within the 'exhibition as broadcast', requiring durational viewing or scheduled broadcast, often online-based).<sup>154</sup> Those ways of working are not unique to new media art and, as Cook notes, may also be found in the wider contemporary art context, although predominantly within practices 'that seek to locate the experience of work outside of the traditional gallery space'.<sup>155</sup> However, these categories also effectively encapsulate both the specific nature of new media art projects and the collaborative models of working, which are at the core of new media curating.

Two of those models, described by Cook: the 'iterative' and the 'modular' imply strongly collaborative ways of working. In the 'iterative' model, the exhibition or a project is a work-in progress, which changes with each iteration of the show, accommodating the variable and dynamic nature of many new media art projects. The exhibition generates a network of gallery spaces – nodes, each of which adapts and modifies the content displaying different aspects and outcomes of each project. In this model the curator collaborates not only with a network of galleries but also with the artists, allowing for a subsequent developments of their projects 'over longer periods of time and in response to changes in technology as well as location'.<sup>156</sup>

Collaboration is also at the core of the 'modular' curatorial model. In this model an exhibition consists of different elements and modules such as performances, talks, presentations, workshops, as well as more traditional presentation formats, thus reflecting the multifaceted nature of new media art production. The exhibition 'might be just one incarnation of a multistring or multilevel interpretational event structure (a platforms) with "guides on the side" or local projects or managers at each location'.<sup>157</sup> The modular curatorial model is often based on collaborations between curators and network of institutions, or exhibition venues with the curator acting as a project manager, a part of a global team, working with different groups of people who are producing the work in each location.<sup>158</sup> The resulting project often has the benefit of developing cumulatively (growing from one international venue to the next) and responsively (informed by and created in reaction to a local context by the respective partners).<sup>159</sup>

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152 Cook, Graham, *Rethinking Curating*. p. 274.

153 Ibid., p. 247.

154 Cook, S. 2008. 'Immateriality and Its Discontents. An Overview of Main Models and Issues for Curating New Media.' In Paul, *New Media in the White Cube*. pp. 26-49.

155 Ibid., p. 44.

156 Ibid., p. 40.

157 Cook, Graham, *Rethinking Curating*, p. 155.

158 Cook, 'Immateriality and Its Discontents', p. 41.

159 Ibid., p. 42.

All the above collaborative curatorial models of working have been developed predominantly outside of traditional institutions, in large-scale exhibitions, biennales, festivals and alternative forms of exhibitions associated with new media art. However, those ways of working have also influenced the curatorial approaches within more traditional art institutions. As already noted in the first part of the contextual review (Section 1.1.2.) based on the example of exhibition *010101. Art in Technological Times* in SFMOMA, analysed by Beryl Graham, new media exhibitions requiring close collaborations between different departments of the museum, necessitated an exchange of knowledge across different curatorial departments as well as those not usually involved in the production of exhibitions (e.g. Systems and Service) and facilitated new cross-departmental working frameworks.

Similarly, new models of institutional practice proposed by new institutionalism have also relied on close collaborations between traditionally separated departments, such as Exhibitions and Education. Institutions developed frameworks and ways of working, which would allow for a closer integration of the work of different departments, especially education into the main programming activities. Sally Tallant, formerly curator of the Serpentine Gallery and currently director of Liverpool Biennale has described integrated models of programming, characteristic for the new institutions based on examples from the Serpentine.<sup>160</sup> Integrated programming, as discussed by Tallant, implies a close collaboration between the different programming teams. Exhibitions, Education and Public programmes are all considered as part of one overall programme of activities. Projects are often multifaceted, develop through various timeframes, result in different outputs and are presented in various formats, across the traditional programming strands (e.g. educational projects can become part of an exhibition). Curators and other members of programming teams work together on different aspects of projects, which results in a blurring of the boundaries between different roles (e.g. educational officers are working as curators and vice versa), as well as exchange of expertise across programming teams.<sup>161</sup>

#### 1.2.4. Summary

This part of the contextual review described a selection of new curatorial approaches and ways of working which have been developed in response to changes in contemporary artistic practice as engendered by a range of socially engaged, place based practices as well as new media, but also reflecting wider changes in curatorial practice, brought by the proliferation of new presentation formats such as the international large-scale exhibitions. The review focused specifically on context-responsive, durational and collaborative curatorial approaches, which were developed predominantly outside of traditional institutional context; in commissioning agencies, biennials, festivals or new media presentation platforms, and have begun to influence institutional curatorial praxis, especially when trying to respond to and deal with the challenges of changing artistic formats and models of working. These curatorial approaches can be found in new models of art institutions proposed by the New Institutionalism as well as new media institutions, and as such provide points of reference for the examination of FACT's curatorial praxis.

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160 Tallant, S. 2009. 'Experiments in Integrated Programming'. *Tate's Online Research Journal*. [PDF]. Online. Available at: <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fd/7285>. Accessed: March 14, 2012.

161 Ibid., pp. 3-6.

**Part II.**  
**FACT's Institutional  
and Curatorial Practice**



## 2. Background of FACT

### 2.1 History

The beginnings of FACT go back to 1985, when two students Josie Barnard and Lisa Haskel launched Merseyside Moviola, a project for screening independent film and video.<sup>1</sup> In 1987 Eddie Berg – later founder of FACT – joined Moviola, and after Barnard and Haskel moved to London (in 1987 and 1988 respectively) took over the running of the project. Berg re-conceived Moviola as ‘commissioning and exhibiting agency specialising in artists’ film and video work’ and established, with the support of Arts Council of Great Britain grant, Video Positive: a biennial festival for new media.<sup>2</sup> Running between 1989 and 2000 Video Positive was, at the time, a unique platform for presentation of new artistic formats emerging from experiments of artists working with film and video.<sup>3</sup>

In 1991, MITES (Moving Image Touring & Exhibition Service) and the Collaboration Programme were established. MITES, with a help of an Arts Council’s grant, acquired a pool of exhibition equipment, which was available for hire by artists and galleries, offering an option for ‘reliable but cheap exhibition technologies.’<sup>4</sup> The Collaboration programme started with a grant from Gulbenkian Foundation, secured in order to establish the position of Video animateur, whose role it was ‘to work with communities of people and other artists to create participatory artworks.’<sup>5</sup> Video Positive, MITES and the Collaboration Programme were the core of Moviola’s operation throughout the 90s.

Around 1995, following examples of other new media organisations across Europe such as Ars Electronica in Linz, or ZKM in Karlsruhe, an idea to create a purpose-built space in Liverpool emerged and a feasibility study was commissioned.<sup>6</sup> The building was perceived to be the next step in developing Moviola’s capacity for supporting new practices:

‘We were commissioning a large amount of work independently or in partnership with UK galleries, or occasionally with mainland European agencies and institutions. But we needed to move on. In time, we needed to establish our own space, to tell our own story, to provide facilities, resources to more effectively and pro-actively support practice and ideas and create a more measured and strategic approach to infrastructural support. But we also needed to establish a place where a wider field of artistic expression through the moving image and new media could be experienced and explored.’<sup>7</sup>

Planning a building also reflected transformation within new media practices, which were moving from occupying a niche position, closer to the mainstream of contemporary art. The building – planned around exhibition spaces – signaled a broadening of FACT’s artistic and institutional focus:

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1 For detailed accounts of FACT’s history See Clayton, *The Art of Regeneration*; Doherty, C. (ed.) 2003. *FACTOR series*. Liverpool: FACT; FACT (ed.) 2009. *We Are the Real Time Experiment*. Liverpool: FACT.

2 Berg, E. 2003. ‘Introduction.’ In C. Doherty (ed.) 2003. *X-FACTOR*. Liverpool: FACT. [no pagination].

3 For detailed analysis of the Video Positive festival and its importance See Clayton, *The Art of Regeneration*, Chapter ‘Art Video Positive’, pp. 89-105.

4 Berg, E. 2003. ‘Video Positive ’91.’ In C. Doherty (ed.) 2003. *FACTOR 1991*. Liverpool: FACT. [no pagination].

5 Ibid.

6 Berg, E. 2003. ‘95: Building Blocks.’ In C. Doherty (ed.) 2003. *FACTOR 1995*. Liverpool: FACT. [no pagination].

7 Ibid.

'Over the last few years FACT has shifted its position from operating within a predominately media arts context to one which is more positioned with contemporary art. This in some ways mirrors the shift globally, as this practice has become closer to the mainstream. One issue for FACT is ensuring that it is able to build on its legacy and position the programme and design of the building so that the right balance is achieved between these two areas.'<sup>8</sup>

However, building projects bring many risks. Clive Gillman, who was appointed the Lead Artist on the FACT centre project, responsible for developing artistic commissions for the building and worked on the design team and in partnership with the building architects, considered both pros and cons of embarking on a large capital building project. Reflecting on the growth of new media centres in the UK, Gillman posed a series of questions, which are worth quoting at length:

'That flagship is necessary to focus practice, to raise profile of activity above the disparate elements that might otherwise constitute it. But beyond this few of us seem aware of any clear reason whether or not such centres can actually support practice. Fewer still have any measure of cultural significance that may have currency in the wider world and can be used to articulate any worth. For the developers of such Centres there is the vanity of leaving your mark, of building your vision in bricks and mortar for the future generations to admire and, of course, our civilisations are often measured by such gestures. Perhaps these gestures are the primary significance, they may be the declarations which slowly serve to shift the gravity from one world to another and mark the ascendancy of one form of culture over another. They may re-engineer perceptions in the hope of seeding or sustaining some interest in a kindled vision. But can they ever hope to serve the more immediate needs of the people for whom they are apparently and expressly meant?'<sup>9</sup>

Debating the issue, Gillman lists problems that new media centres face; 'they are often more expensive to run than smaller, more flexible incarnations offering the same services.'<sup>10</sup> Gillman gives example of The Lux in London, which, although being acclaimed as a major 'landmark on the London cultural map,' came with significant costs and the building brought it to the brink of bankruptcy. 'So why is there a drive to invest so much to construct entities which are potentially inefficient and possibly less effective at serving measurable needs of their stated communities?' asks Gillman.<sup>11</sup> One answer, which Gillman proposes is what he refers to as 'proximity effect': 'The ability to be working in physical proximity to like-minded people and to therefore feel more comfortable, to feel "at home." To have your intentions confirmed simply by being given access to a space in which are represented some of your aspirations.'<sup>12</sup>

From Gillman's account it transpires that there is an element of opportunism behind some of the UK's new arts infrastructure projects. With the introduction of National Lottery Capital Funds designated to develop arts infrastructure,<sup>13</sup> the development has, according to Gillman, been almost 'irresistible.'<sup>14</sup> That was very much the case with FACT and Liverpool. The context of Liverpool played

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8 Gillman, C. 2001. 'FACT Centre Liverpool.' Presentation at CRUMB Seminars. Online. Available at: <http://www.crumbweb.org/getPresentation.php?presID=8&op=4>. Accessed: April 12, 2012.

9 Gillman, C. 1999. 'The Flashing Prompt. New Media Centres and Regeneration.' Online. Available at: [www.clivegillman.net](http://www.clivegillman.net). Accessed: April 12, 2012.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 National Lottery Fund administered by Arts Council of England (ACE) provides grants for infrastructure projects. For details See Arts Council, 2014. 'Capital Funding and building projects.' Online. Available at: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/information-funded-organisations/grant-award-logo-and-guide-lines/funding-logos/capital-funding-and-building-projects/>. Accessed: June 13, 2014.

14 Gillman, The Flashing Prompt'.

an important role in catalysing the idea of the building. Liverpool has Objective 1 status which, under European Union's Structural Fund Regulations, means that there were (and are) many opportunities to access European funding.<sup>15</sup> In Liverpool at the time of the FACT building development, certain areas were designated as development zones, including the Ropewalks area which was included in a larger plan to develop a Cultural Quarter.<sup>16</sup> As Gillman recounts, 'they wanted a flagship building in this area and FACT showed that they were an organisation who could deliver this flagship project'.<sup>17</sup>

In 1999, Moviola changed its name to Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT). The same year, the building project gained a momentum; the feasibility study was completed, the funding was secured,<sup>18</sup> and Austin-Smith-Lord was appointed architect. The development of the building was envisaged as a collaboration between the design team and FACT. The plans included a series of artistic commissions to be produced for and around the building and the appointment of Gilman in his role as Lead Artist. In 2000, the work on Wood Street begun and in February 2003 the building opened to the public.

## 2.2. FACT Centre

FACT centre is a six-storey height building, which stands out from the architecture of the surrounding red brick buildings. The facade clad in grey zinc tiles features a large wide screen bent around two front elevations, above the entrance facing Ropewalks Square. Inside, the design is raw with rough concrete walls and black polished concrete floors. Breaking the minimal interior design are the curves of the ceiling at the back of the building formed by the underside of the slanted floor of cinema spaces and two large staircases, connecting ground floor with the first and the second floor. The main sources of light on the ground floor are: a large window screen facade and a large window at the back of the building. According to the architects 'the building is bold but welcoming'.<sup>19</sup>

The ground floor houses the Media Lounge (now FACT Connects Space), the main gallery space (Gallery 1), the box office, cafe, and The Box. The Media Lounge, located next to the main entrance, and originally separated from the foyer space with glazed panels, was designed to look like a ticket office at a train station; 'intended to create an atmosphere where you feel the space is somewhere to go and find out more'.<sup>20</sup> Gallery 1 is large black box space with a raised floor and a lighting system in-

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15 European Unions Structural Funds are 'financial instruments of European Union regional policy [...] intended to narrow the development disparities among regions and the members of state'. The largest of the structural Funds is the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which aims to provide support for 'creation of infrastructure and productive job-creating investment'. See Europa, 2013. 'Summaries of legislation.' Online. Available at: [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/glossary/structural\\_cohesion\\_fund\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/structural_cohesion_fund_en.htm). Accessed: April 12, 2013

Objective 1 is 'to promote the development and structural adjustment of regions, whose development is lagging behind' See Europa, 2013. 'Summaries of EU legislation. Objective 1.' Online. Available at: [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/regional\\_policy/provisions\\_and\\_instruments/g24203\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/regional_policy/provisions_and_instruments/g24203_en.htm). Accessed April 12, 2013.

16 Gillman, 'FACT Centre Liverpool'.

17 Ibid.

18 Jane Clayton's analysis of FACT's archival documents provide the details of funding for the building: overall the cost of the building came to 11 million; 8 million came through Arts Council of England, (of which 4 million came from the National Lottery), 3 million from British Film Institute, City Screen, English Partnership, Granada Foundation, Liverpool City Council and European Regional Development Funds. See Clayton, *The Art of Regeneration*. p. 174.

19 Austin Smith: Lord, 2013. 'The FACT Centre'. Online. Available at: <http://www.austinsmithlord.com/projects/the-fact-centre/>. Accessed: April 14, 2013.

20 Gillman, 'FACT Centre Liverpool'.



Fig. 2 FACT facade. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 3 FACT staircase. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 4 FACT foyer and the original glazed panel wall of the Media Lounge. Image courtesy of FACT.



stalled in a hanging grid.<sup>21</sup> The raised floor is made out of removable rubber tiles and hides multiple power and data connection points which allow for full flexibility in terms of installing and connecting equipment at any point in the gallery. To the back of Gallery 1 there is a loading bay and a technical space/workshop, opening onto Wood Street. The Box, which is situated opposite the entrance to Gallery 1 and adjacent to the cafe at the back of the building, is a small cinema and event space, equipped with a large screen and moveable sofa pit that allows for flexible seating configurations.

On the first floor, there is a smaller gallery (Gallery 2) which was designed for showing more personal projects.<sup>22</sup> It has a low slanted ceiling and there are two large columns dividing the space.<sup>23</sup> Opposite the entrance to Gallery 2 there is a bar area. On the second floor there are three cinema screens ranging in capacity from 100 to 250 seats. The third floor is occupied by FACT's office, meeting spaces and production facilities, the Media Lab. Originally, the plans also included residency facilities and studio-flats for artists. Those, however, were not realised for financial reasons.<sup>24</sup>



Fig. 5 FACT Media Facade. Image courtesy of FACT.

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21 Gallery 1 – total area 192m<sup>2</sup>, ceiling height: 5.4 m (to base of the lighting rig). Facilities include: loading doors, that can be sealed and masked during exhibitions, raised floor, power and data from any position, floor covering light grey rubber tiles, DMX controlled lighting, load bearing lighting rig.

22 Gillman, 'FACT Centre Liverpool'.

23 Gallery 2. total area 115m<sup>2</sup> (plus lobby 6 m<sup>2</sup>), ceiling height: highest point 5.10 m, low walls 3.30m (to base of lighting rig 3.15m) Facilities include black polished concrete floor, power point and data from fixed floor boxes, load bearing lighting rig, DMX controlled lighting, window on north wall.

24 Gillman, 'FACT Centre Liverpool'.

The FACT building is largely defined by its function as a cinema, and as Clive Gillman notes, the cinema form was an important inspiration in its design.<sup>25</sup> FACT shares the building with Picturehouse Cinemas, run by a separate, private company City Screens Ltd. City Screens were involved in the FACT building, as partners and co-investors. However, the partnership turned out to be a difficult one. There were disagreements between the FACT team and City Screens regarding the design of the building, particularly the facade, which – according to City Screens – lacked ‘conventional cinema features such as posters and readograph’.<sup>26</sup> After the building opened, the FACT team became increasingly disappointed that Picturehouse film programme, despite the company’s declared commitment to presenting art house cinema, was more mainstream than expected.<sup>27</sup>

According to Gilman, the centrality of the cinema to the conception of the FACT building was very pragmatic: cinemas deliver audiences.<sup>28</sup> Gilman also writes about not wanting to create a sense of ‘stepping into gallery’,<sup>29</sup> an effect which has indeed been achieved, perhaps too well. The gallery spaces are hidden away behind heavy wooden doors out of the way of the main thoroughfare, and thus, the overall outcome of the design is that many of the visitors are unaware that FACT is also a gallery.<sup>30</sup> Paradoxically, the cinema partnership and building design then fail to achieve the initial objective of using the cinema as a means to deliver a greater audience numbers and a broader audience to the exhibitions.

Since the building opened, it has been through a series of changes in the course of which FACT has attempted to open up its gallery space, and make its cultural role more evident. In early 2012, The Media Lounge space downstairs was opened up into the foyer space, and was renamed the FACT Connects Space.<sup>31</sup> Projects presented in this newly configured space thus far have been highly interactive and accessible (e.g. *Noisy Table*, an interactive ping pong table, making music as you play)<sup>32</sup> as a means of immediately engaging and grasping the attention of the audience walking into the building.

FACT has also set out to make the exhibitions ‘spill out’ from the gallery spaces. Efforts have been made to activate liminal spaces within the FACT building, such as the foyer space next to the cafe or the bar area on the first floor. A great deal of consideration has also been given to ‘opening up’ FACT to adjacent public spaces; predominantly the Ropewalks Square in front of FACT and, to lesser extent, the Square on Fleet Street behind FACT. As the current CEO, Mike Stubbs, noted, the opening up of FACT in order to make it more ‘porous’ is one of his main missions.<sup>33</sup>

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25 Ibid.

26 Clayton, *The Art of Regeneration* p. 177.

27 Ibid., p. 177.

28 Gillman, ‘FACT Centre Liverpool’.

29 Ibid.

30 This is clearly documented in the audience research report, which FACT had commissioned. As the report states ‘Almost all users see FACT predominantly as a cinema, with additional facilities’. See Wafer, K., Hadley, D. 2012. ‘FACT. Audience Research Report. July 2012’. Wafer Headley. p. 14.

31 See FACT, 2014. ‘FACT Connects Space’. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/fact-connects.aspx>. Accessed: April 12, 2014.

32 FACT, 2014. ‘Noisy Table’. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/noisy-table/>. Accessed: April 12, 2014.

33 Stubbs, M. 2013. Interviewed by the author, October 8.

One way of making FACT more public facing was an installation of interactive LED screen on the glass facade above FACT's main entrance. The newly installed media screen allowed for interactive interventions and urban games, to be played on the screen, activating the main facade, which became a public interface. FACT is now part of Connecting Cities network, programming and commissioning a series of works for urban media screens.<sup>34</sup>

### 2.3. FACT now – institutional parameters

FACT is constituted as a charity with a 'trading arm' (FACT Services) with the majority of its funding coming from Arts Council of England (ACE) and Liverpool City Council alongside grants from other public and private sector agencies.<sup>35</sup> In 2012, FACT became an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), one of (currently) 696 cultural organisations across England whose core funding comes from the Arts Council of England.<sup>36</sup> National Portfolio funding was introduced in 2012, in response to funding's cuts to ACE after the government's spending review in 2010. National Portfolio funding involves tighter assessment criteria and requires funded art organisations to reapply for their funding on a regular basis.<sup>37</sup> FACT's current funding is in the region of 1 million pounds per year. Compared to some other art organisations, which either lost a significant part, or all of their funding in the cuts implemented in 2011, FACT has been relatively lucky as it (only) lost 11% of its ACE funding.<sup>38</sup>

As an NPO, FACT is required to submit a funding application to ACE every three years, outlining its missions and purpose and how they fit within ACE's goals and priorities, as well as its plan of activities, a detailed budget and management accounts.<sup>39</sup> As part of the funding application and the funding agreement process FACT and ACE agree on Key Performance Indicators by means of which the performance of the organisation is monitored.<sup>40</sup>

A key document defining FACT's current institutional parameters is the Business Plan, which provides an overview of organisational agendas, strategies and the main programming directions. The Business Plan (2012-2015) restates FACT's mission thus:

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34 Connecting Cities is European network of media facades and city screens programing art content. See Connecting Cities, 2013. 'About Connecting Cities.' Online. Available at: <http://www.connectingcities.net/about-connecting-cities>. Accessed: April 14, 2013.

35 FACT, 2012. 'Business Plan 2012-2015.' Available on FACT hard drive. p. 2.

36 See Arts Council, 2013. 'National Portfolio Funding Programme 2012-2015.' Online. Available at: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/apply-funding/funding-programmes/national-portfolio-funding-programme/>. Accessed: June 26, 2013.

37 See Arts Council, 2012. 'The Relationship Between Arts Council and Funded Organisations.' [PDF]. Online. Available at: [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/FINALrelationship\\_framework\\_1904.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/FINALrelationship_framework_1904.pdf). Accessed: June 26, 2013.

38 In 2011, 206 arts organisations in the UK lost 100% of their funding. See Rogers, S. 2011. 'Arts Council Founding: Get the Full Decisions List'. *Guardian*. March 30. Online. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2011/mar/30/arts-council-funding-decisions-list?gclid=Graphic:in%20body%20link>. Accessed: June 20, 2013.

39 See Arts Council, 2013. 'National Portfolio Funding Programme. Guidance for Applicants.' Online. Available at: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/national-portfolio-funding-programme/how-we-made-our-decision/how-apply/>. Accessed: June 20, 2013.

40 For explanation of KPI See Arts Council, 2011. 'Next Steps and FAQ for National Portfolio Organisation' [PDF]. Online. Available at: [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/NPO\\_funding\\_agreement\\_next\\_steps.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/NPO_funding_agreement_next_steps.pdf). Accessed: June 20, 2013. pp. 3-4.

'To be the national centre for media art and new media where people, art, creativity and technology meet. Expansive and Emergent – a place where many communities meet and recognise that Art is Innovation, attracting artists and designers demonstrating significant benefits for all of society.'<sup>41</sup>

There are six strategic aims within the current Business Plan:

'(1). to originate and deliver excellent, innovative art; (2). to support artists and artists' practice and strengthen the sector; (3). to engage audiences through creative technology, (4). to grow organisational effectiveness, (5). to operate a strong business model, (6). to grow and develop capital infrastructure.'<sup>42</sup>

As such, it becomes possible to see that FACT's core values and mission have remained largely unchanged; FACT has been committed to connecting art, society and technology since its inception. While the first three strategic aims identified in the Business Plan are self-explanatory, the latter three point towards organisational effectiveness as an important focus for FACT. These need to be considered in the context of ACE's increased pressure on arts organisations to develop strong business models while lessening their dependency on public funding.<sup>43</sup> The Business Plan identifies organisational changes, which see FACT moving from a heavy reliance on public funding to 'a wider basket of income' through 'increased turnover on services, corporate giving, productisation, business incubation and a revised fundraising plan.'<sup>44</sup> The 'strengthening of the FACT brand' and the 're-imagining of the FACT experience' involving changes to the building described above and improvements to marketing and programming strategies are seen as key to organisational effectiveness.<sup>45</sup> More focus will be given to the organisation's presence on-line: through more digital commissions and better exploitation of the digital space, which will complement FACT's exhibition offer. 'This approach – curating across spaces – will enable further experimentation and layering of digital, the urban realm and gallery spaces.'<sup>46</sup>

Also identified in the Business Plan are new strategies for achieving greater organisational efficiency. One of them is Producer Model which will include 'cost centred on projects and use of freelance associates to build capacity.'<sup>47</sup> The Business Plan does not provide a lot of information about the Producer Model and what it would encompass, however, a consultancy report helps to identify the model:

'[...] smaller working groups of staff, freelancers and commercial partners would develop a mixed slate of projects to include digital film, curated shows, education work, online projects, smart phone apps, artist projects, labs with artists and publications (print and electronic). It is tacitly understood that such programme would connect with ACE's key performance indicators, refresh the project strands, inculcate a more entrepreneurial culture, and limit risk (in terms of finance).'

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41 FACT, 'Business Plan 2012-2015' p. 7.

42 Ibid., pp. 7-13.

43 See Royce, S.J. 2011 'Business Models in the Visual Art: an Investigation of Organisational Business Models for the Turning Point Network and Arts Council England'. [PDF]. Online. Available at: [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Final\\_business\\_models.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Final_business_models.pdf). Accessed August 20 2013. p. 20 .

44 FACT, 'Business Plan' p. 6.

45 Ibid., p. 4.

46 Ibid., p. 4.

47 Ibid., p. 6.

48 Poulter, S. and Associates. 2011. 'FACT: Digital Innovation: Draft.' Consultancy Report. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 6.

Outlining FACT's institutional parameters and organisational aims, the Business Plan indicates the direction FACT is moving towards. The important focus for the institution, apart from delivering its artistic mission, is building greater organisational effectiveness, operating strong business model, strengthening of FACT's brand and more effective income generation which can be considered as part of a wider move towards more entrepreneurial culture, as suggested in the consultancy report quoted above.



### 3. Programming at FACT

FACT produces a varied programme of exhibitions, events and projects which are presented within the FACT building as well as across the city and internationally. The projects are developed through FACT's main programming strands: Exhibitions, Collaboration and Engagement as well as the AND festival and numerous national and international collaborations. In recent years, FACT has also placed an emphasis on growing a stronger and more sustained research and development culture and has facilitated multiple partnerships between artists, technologists, researchers and academics.<sup>1</sup>

The different elements and aspects of FACT's programming, as well as the curatorial approaches and production models within them are the focus of this chapter. The analysis concentrates on the design and delivery of programmes by Collaboration and Engagement, the AND festival and Exhibitions, which have been at the core of FACT's activities during the period under study. Although since 2012 AND has become more independent from FACT and other co-funding institutions it has had a significant impact of the organisation and curatorial practice at FACT and is therefore a subject of analysis.

The purpose of the analysis is to describe and examine different curatorial approaches and modes of production developed within Exhibitions, Collaboration and Engagement and the AND festival, while considering the advantages, limitations and complexities of working within particular programming and presentation frameworks. The chapter provides an overview of the three programming areas, including their history and important past and current projects before proceeding to a detailed analysis of two selected recent projects from each programming strand, which were produced within the timeframe of this study: 2009 to 2013.

The projects were selected as best exemplifying the differences between the curatorial and production models of Exhibitions, Collaboration and Engagement and the AND festival. While the focus of analysis is firmly on curatorial and production models, additional aspects of each project including the artwork, the project duration, and its sustainability within particular presentation contexts are discussed in order to help highlight the different considerations and challenges that influence curatorial decisions and shape the various approaches and models of working.

A focus on production models and curatorial approaches also reveals larger institutional patterns and processes including how the institution plans the programming activities, sets its priorities, defines its sense of purpose and what factors influence its decisions. It demonstrates how curatorial and production approaches develop within particular institutional framework and how this institutional framework, in turn, influences the practice of curators.

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<sup>1</sup> Part of FACT's research strategy is a recent development of FACTLab designed to bring together academics, artists, developers and producers by means of a dedicated web site featuring a discussion forum, newsletter, proposal space, and an online digital projects space. See FACT, 2013. 'Research and Innovation Business Development Plan.' Available on FACT hard drive.

### 3. 1. Exhibitions

#### 3.1.1. Overview

The history of FACT's exhibitions starts with Moviola's Video Positive festival, running bi-annually between 1989 and 2000. Video Positive was one of the first UK festivals focused on commissioning and presenting moving image installations:

'It was the first attempt to create a festival of artists' film and video in the UK that focused on installation projects and it was presented at a time when little investment was made outside of London in supporting artists' film and video production and exhibition. It was also a time when much of this practice was situated at the margins of the contemporary art world, at least in Britain.'<sup>2</sup>

Overall, six festivals were organised by Moviola and FACT and were presented in various venues across the city including Tate Liverpool, the Bluecoat, Open Eye Gallery, the Walker Art Gallery and others.<sup>3</sup> Video Positive (VP) which commissioned and presented works by artists such as David Hall, Judith God-



Fig. 6 Lynn Hershman, *Leeson* (the original prototype exhibited at Video Positive 95; later shown in *Re: [Video Positive]*). Installation view, *Re: [Video Positive]* exhibition, FACT, 2007. Image courtesy of FACT.

dard, (VP '89), Madelon Hooykass & Elsa Stansfield, Tony Oursler, Julie Meyers and Anne Douglas (VP' 91), Breda Beban/Hrvoje Horvatic, Peter Callas (VP' 93), Lynn Hershman, Graham Harwood, Lei Cox (VP' 95), Wood & Harrison, Jane Prophet (VP' 97), Dryden Goodwin and Monica Oeschler (VP' 00) among others, had a significant impact on the development of artists' film and video in the UK.<sup>4</sup>

2 Berg, E. 2003. 'Introduction.' In Doherty, C. (ed.) 2003. *X-FACTOR*. Liverpool: FACT. [no pagination].

3 Berg, E. 2003. 'Video Positive 89'. In Doherty, C. (ed.) 2003. *FACTOR 1989*. Liverpool: FACT [no pagination].

4 For a detailed discussion of the Video Positive festival, its history and impact See Clayton, *The Art of Regeneration*. Chapter Art: Video Positive. pp. 89-105.



Video Positive provides an interesting example of exhibition making, which, to a large extent, defined FACT's ways of working. The success of the festival was built on an extensive collaboration with different cultural partners and through securing various sources of funding.<sup>5</sup> The first Video Positive was shown in Tate Liverpool, the Bluecoat and Williamson Gallery in Birkenhead. The funding was a mix of Arts Council grants and in-kind sponsorship, mostly by Samcon, who provided technical equipment and expertise.<sup>6</sup> Combining the different contributions enabled Moviola to stage an ambitious exhibition, showing a number of new commissions, including a 42 monitor video wall (programmed by Samcon's team) presented at Tate Liverpool.<sup>7</sup>

Apart from Video Positive another important event organised by FACT in its pre-building period was the *revolution 98* exhibition, curated by Eddie Berg and Charles Esche and presented as part of the



Fig. 7 and 8 Isaac Julien, *Baltimore*, 2003. Installation view, Gallery 1. FACT, 2003. Images courtesy of FACT.

5 Berg, 'Video Positive 89'.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

International Symposium on Electronic Art (ISEA),<sup>8</sup> which FACT brought to Liverpool and Manchester. The symposium was organised in collaboration with Liverpool John Moores University and Manchester Metropolitan University. ISEA 98 presented 60 multimedia artworks, screenings and performances, many of which were new commissions. The exhibition took place across 25 sites including galleries, warehouses, theatres and clubs in Liverpool and Manchester, as well as online.<sup>9</sup>

The opening of the FACT building with its two exhibition spaces brought an obvious change to the way exhibitions were planned and delivered. From the bi-annual, short, multi-venue collaborative exhibitions of Video Positive, FACT needed to shift to a more traditional exhibition production model, focused around one venue and delivering a regular programme of exhibitions throughout the year.

Some responses from FACT staff working during the transition period give insight into the different considerations that came with the building and the transformation of FACT as an organisation during that time. Michael Connor, who was a New Media Curator at FACT prior to and after the building opened, reflects on the nature of the transformation of FACT that came with the building, providing an interesting comparison between the agency and venue based institutions:

'[...] talking about this in general terms rather than specific ones, I think that for an organisation to have an agency model where they have no building allows them to be more flexible. [...] You can space out your programme to suit your own needs rather than because you have gaps in the programme [...]. You don't have the same kind of infrastructural demands on an organisation of paying the security and cleaners. I think any organisation that goes from an agency to a building will take on a lot more I guess institutional structure. I mean, I think that FACT was able to retain it in my time there the feeling of being an agency that occupied a building'.<sup>10</sup>

Despite being able to retain the operational flexibility of an agency, with the exhibition spaces came the need to produce regular shows. Originally six shows per year were presented, later the number of shows came down to four per year. Inevitably, exhibitions became the focus of FACT's programming.

The opening of FACT building was celebrated with a new three-screen installation *Baltimore*, by Isaac Julien, commissioned especially for this occasion.<sup>11</sup> Displayed on large screens in Gallery 1, this highly cinematic piece by a prominent artist filmmaker, showcased the potential of FACT's newly opened exhibition spaces and its capacity to take film and video installation to a new level in terms of scale and technical quality.<sup>12</sup>

Film and video installations dominated many exhibitions presented in the newly opened gallery spaces including *Deanimated* (2003), a first UK solo show of Viennese filmmaker Martin Arnold and a group exhibition *At the Still Point of the Turning Worlds* (2004), which brought together video works of many international artists. Other shows of film and video makers included Salla Tyka's *Cave Tril-*

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8 ISEA (International Symposium on Electronic Art), funded in 1990 is an annual gathering of art and science community, which takes place in different location every year. The symposium includes an academic conference, exhibitions, workshops and performances. See ISEA, 2014. 'Home.' Online. Available at: <http://www.isea-web.org/>. Accessed: March 12, 2014.

9 FACT, *We Are the Real Time Experiment*. p. 37.

10 Connor, M. 2013. Interviewed by the author, May 23.

11 See FACT, 2014. 'Isaac Julien Baltimore'. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/isaac-julien-baltimore.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

12 Hickling, A. 2003. 'Isaac Julien. FACT, Liverpool'. *Guardian*. February 28. Online. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2003/feb/28/art.artsfeatures>. Accessed: July 20, 2013.

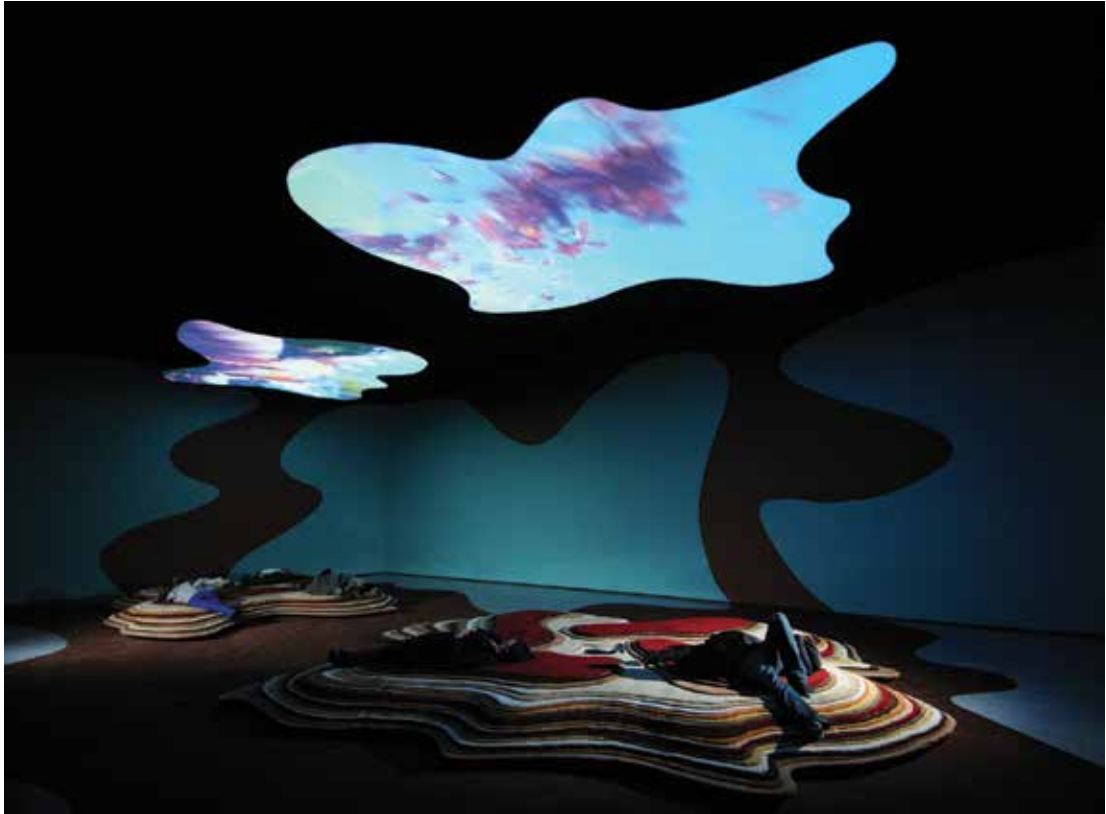


Fig. 9 Pippilotti Rist, *Gravity Be My Friend*, 2008. Installation view, Gallery 1. FACT, 2008. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 10 Pippilotti Rist, *Ever is Over All*, 1997. Installation view, Gallery 1. FACT, 2008. Image courtesy of FACT.

ogy (2004), Candice Breitz's *Becoming* (2004), Mark Lewis's *Howlin Wolf* (2006), Christian Jankowski *Everything Fall Together* (2006), *AI* and *AI Eternal Youth* (2008) and the highly acclaimed and popular show of the work of the video art pioneer Pippilotti Rist (2008). A significant exhibition in terms of presenting and documenting UK's history of film and video was a retrospective of Black Audio Film



Fig. 11 Bernie Lubell, *Theory of Entanglement*, 2009. Installation view, FACT foyer, 2009. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 10 Bernie Lubell, *Conservation of Intimacy*, 2005. Installation view, Gallery 1. FACT, 2009. Image courtesy of FACT.

Collective, *Ghosts of Songs* (2007), a touring exhibition curated by Otolith Group, which was accompanied by a catalogue (published by FACT and the University of Liverpool), and was the first exhibition devoted to the work of the renowned British filmmakers group.<sup>13</sup>

13 See FACT, 2007. 'The Ghosts of Songs. A Retrospective of the Black Audio Film Collective. Gallery Guide' [PDF]. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/media/5475782/BAFC%20Gallery%20Guide.pdf>. Accessed: July 20, 2013.



Another important focus of FACT's exhibition programme was to present artistic experiments with new technologies. One of the most ambitious in its scale exhibition of new experimental technologies was *Sk-interfaces* (2008), which explored the intersection of art and biotechnology. Presenting many cutting-edge art and science projects, such as *Victimless Leather* (lab grown leather jacket) by Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr, or biological architectural structures by Zbigniew Oksiuta, the exhibition – accompanied by a catalogue with essays by curators and academics – was an important contribution to the discussion about emerging practices of bioart.<sup>14</sup> The exhibition was part of a larger research programme *Human Futures*, which took place during the Liverpool's year as the European Capital of Culture and explored ideas around the social impact of technological innovation.<sup>15</sup>

FACT has also experimented with exhibition formats, and modes of interactivity offered to the audience. Bernie Lubell's exhibition *Theory of Entanglement* (2009), presented a series of interactive wooden machines/sculptures which were operated by the audience. Playful, absurd or quasi-scientific Lubell's machines included a large-scale new commission *Theory of Entanglement*, which required two people to pedal together on wooden bicycles at different speed to operate a giant knitting machine installed in the foyer and *Conservation of Intimacy* (2005) powered by two people rocking on a spring-bench.<sup>16</sup> The *Winter Sparks* exhibition (2012) offered the audience an experiential journey into a spectacle of sound and light featuring, amongst other works, a large immersive environment filled with electric sparks and sounds of electric discharge (*Evolving Sparks Network* by Edwin van der Heide, Gallery 1) and an interactive installation of Tesla coils (*Impacts* by Alexander Burton, Gallery 2).<sup>17</sup>

Through its exhibitions, FACT also attempted to critically examine the social and political implications of new technologies. Exhibition *My War. Participation in an Age of Conflict* (2010) examined how web communication tools changed the way of presenting and dealing with experience of war. The exhibition featured many interesting works including Thompson and Craighead's *A Short Film and War*, presenting an alternative documentary narrative about war made entirely from information found on the web (private pictures, blogs, videos) and Joseph Delappe's *Dead in Iraq*, an ongoing online intervention into US Army recruiting game (*America's Army*), which hijacks the game's messaging service to give the details of American service persons who died in Iraq conflict. Accompanied by a catalogue, the exhibition posed questions about the impact of new technologies and communication tools on the construction of reality but also investigated the democratic potential of new media to provide platforms for public debate, enabling citizen journalism and the presentation of alternative discourses as well as tools for social and political critique.<sup>18</sup>

The exhibitions that took place during the research period of this study (2009 to 2013) build a picture of FACT's recent curatorial interests and artistic direction. The exhibitions (20 in total, as FACT

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14 Hauser, J. (ed.) 2008. *Sk-interfaces. Exploring Borders – Creating Membranes in Art, Technology and Society*. Liverpool: FACT and Liverpool University Press.

15 Miah, A. (ed.) 2008. *Human Futures: Art in an Age of Uncertainty*. Liverpool: FACT and Liverpool University Press.

16 See FACT, 2009. 'Bernie Lubell. A Theory of Entanglement. Gallery Guide.' [PDF]. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/media/5475785/Bernie%20Lubell%20gallery%20guide%20low%20res.pdf>. Accessed: July 20, 2013.

17 FACT, 2014. 'Winter Sparks.' Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/winter-sparks/>. Accessed: January 23, 2014.

18 Corcoran, H., Himmelsbah, S., Broeckman, A. (eds.) 2010. *My War. Participation in an Age of Conflict*. Liverpool, Oldenburg: FACT and Edith Russ Site for Media Art.



Fig. 13 Peter Appleton, Laser link between FACT and the Tate, as part of the Nam June Paik exhibition. Tate Liverpool, FACT, 2010. Image courtesy of FACT.

presents 4 exhibitions per year) can be broadly grouped into several categories, based on their main focus and curatorial approach:

1. Historical – documenting the history of new media art and culture: e.g., *The Nam June Paik exhibition* (2010), which was a large retrospective of new media ‘Godfather’ shown at FACT and Tate Liverpool,<sup>19</sup> and *The Art of Pop Video* (2013), which presented the history of music videos.<sup>20</sup>
2. Contextual – looking to critically address issues around new technologies and contemporary culture: e.g., *My War. Participation in an Age of Conflict*, discussed above; *Republic of the Moon* (2012), which presented artistic responses to lunar explorations;<sup>21</sup> *Persistence of Vision* (2010) investigating the relationship between vision, cognition and memory;<sup>22</sup> *Space Invaders* (2010), which examined the impact of gaming and screen based technologies on experience of reality.<sup>23</sup>
3. Experimental – innovative with regard to the works presented as well as the exhibition format: e.g., the above mentioned *Winter Sparks* and *Theory of Entanglement; Robots and Avatars* (2012), pre-

19 FACT, 2014. ‘Nam June Paik’. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/nam-june-paik.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

20 FACT, 2014. ‘The Art of Pop Video’. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/the-art-of-pop-video.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014. FACT, 2014. ‘Liverpool Biennial 2010’. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/liverpool-biennial-2010.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

21 FACT, 2014. ‘Republic of the Moon’. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/republic-of-the-moon.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

22 FACT, 2014. ‘Persistence of Vision’. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/persistence-of-vision/>. Accessed: January 20, 2014. See also Kholeif, O., Brogger, A. (eds.) 2010. *Vision, Memory and Media*. Liverpool, Copenhagen: FACT and Nikolaj Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center.

23 FACT, 2014. ‘Space Invaders’. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/space-invaders.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014. See also Catlow, R. et al (eds.) 2010. *Artists Re:thinking Games*. Liverpool: FACT.



Fig. 14 Nam June Paik, *Laser Cone*, 1998. Installation view, Gallery 1. The *Nam June Paik* exhibition, FACT, 2012. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 15 Hegen Betzwieser and Sue Corke, *We Colonized the Moon*, 2012, installation and performance during the *Republic of the Moon* exhibition, FACT, 2012. Image courtesy of FACT.

senting many experimental artwork at the intersection of art, design and technology; *Climate for Change* (2009), envisaged as a participatory debate and an experiment in social activism and *The Humble Market* (2013), which was an exhibition designed as a performative event (the latter three exhibitions are discussed in detail further in the thesis).

4. Solo-shows – presenting work of one artist or an artist group: *Worlds in the Making* (2011), which focused on the work of young artistic duo Semiconductor;<sup>24</sup> *Primitive* (2009), which presented film and video work of acclaimed Thai artist and activist Apitchatpong Weersethakul; *Mark Boulous* (2013), which featured films and videos and an immersive interactive installation by Mark Boulous.

5. Regular collaborations – exhibitions presented at FACT on a regular basis, produced collaboratively by FACT and another institution, based on established partnerships: AND festival exhibitions (*Primitive*; *The Humble Market*; *Mark Boulous*, mentioned above) and the Liverpool Biennial shows (*Liverpool Biennial*, 2010; *The Unexpected Guest*, 2012).<sup>25</sup>

6. Institutional – documenting and reflecting on FACT's own practice: *Knowledge Lives Everywhere* (2011), which presented the work of FACT's Collaboration's programme,<sup>26</sup> and *Turning FACT Inside Out* (2013), which celebrated 10th anniversary of FACT's building and examined the workings of FACT, both as a building and an art institution (discussed in detail in Chapter 4).

In the section that follows, two examples of FACT's recent exhibitions are discussed. *Robots and Avatars*, as a very experimental exhibition in terms of the works presented, exemplifies some of the challenges of presenting technologically complex work in an exhibition format. *Climate for Change* is a significant example of a show that, inspired by media lab culture, tried to experiment with the curatorial and presentation format.

### **3.1.2. At the cutting edge of technology, art and design – *Robots and Avatars***

#### **March-May 2012**

*Robots and Avatars* is an example of exhibition focused on presenting cutting edge innovative works at the intersection of art, design and technology. The exhibition was a part of a larger research project, originally initiated by London-based design collective <body-data-space> in partnership with NESTA, which grew into a bigger collaboration between various European partners, supported by funding from the EU Culture Programme.<sup>27</sup> The project was set up to explore:

'how young people will work and play with the new representation forms of themselves and others in virtual and physical life in the next 10-15 years [...] *Robots and Avatars* – by looking at the future of work and play - examines the multi identity evolutions of today's younger generations within the context of a world in which the virtual and the physical spaces are increasingly blended.'<sup>28</sup>

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24 FACT, 2014. 'Semiconductor. Worlds in the Making'. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/semiconductor-worlds-in-the-making.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

25 FACT, 2014. 'Liverpool Biennial 2012. The Unexpected Guest'. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/liverpool-biennial-2012-the-unexpected-guest.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

26 FACT, 2014. 'Knowledge Lives Everywhere'. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/knowledge-lives-everywhere.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

27 *Robots and Avatars*, 2014. 'Robots and Avatars – Our Colleagues and Playmates of the Future'. Online. Available at: <http://www.robotsandavatars.net/>. Accessed: July 20, 2014.

28 Ibid.





Fig.16 Michael Takeo Magruder, *Visions of Our Communal Dreams*, 2012. Installation view, Media Lounge and FACT foyer. *Robots and Avatars* exhibition, FACT, 2012. Image courtesy of FACT.

*Robots and Avatars* presented a variety of works, which were selected following an internationally circulated open call.<sup>29</sup> Artworks included virtual reality projects, wearable and robotic technologies and online-based work using social networks. One of the works especially commissioned for the exhibition was Michael Takeo Magruder's piece *Vision of Our Communal Dreams*. The piece, shown in Media Lounge, Gallery 2 and the FACT foyer, was an interactive environment that blended virtual, physical and networked environments.<sup>30</sup> The piece consisted of two spaces – physical and virtual, which were interconnected, allowing for real-time interaction, such as creating one's own avatar and navigating the virtual world from different portals (gallery space, the web). The project was produced in collaboration with young people from Liverpool, who learned how to create the 3D virtual environment and build a series of avatars.<sup>31</sup>

29 200 applications from 27 countries were received. The jury consisting of international panel of experts (including FACT's CEO Mike Stubs) selected 3 new commissions and 14 exhibits to be produced and presented in the exhibition. See *Robots and Avatars*, 2014. 'Exhibition'. Online. Available at: <http://www.robotsandavatars.net/exhibition/>. Accessed: July 20, 2014.

30 FACT, 2014. 'Robots and Avatars'. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/robots-and-avatars/michael-takeo-magruder-visions-of-our-communal-dreams.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

31 Collaboration with 9 students from Weatherhead Media Arts College. For details See FACT, 2014. 'Visions of Our Communal Dreams'. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/visions-of-our-communal-dreams/>. Accessed: July 20, 2014.

In Gallery 1, two installations were presented. The first one was an analogue installation *ADA* by Karina Smigla Bobinski, consisting of a large inflated floating globe, to which attached were pieces of coal, that left marks on the walls and the ceiling when the globe was pushed around the gallery by the visitors. *ADA* was a 'performance-machine', in which the audience, interacting with the globe, became co-creators of the work.<sup>32</sup> The second part of Gallery 1 was occupied by Lawrence Malstaf's installation *Compass*. This piece was described as a 'living installation' and 'an individual performance experience [...] situated somewhere between art and theatre.'<sup>33</sup> The piece consisted of a wearable machine, a type of a large metal belt, which could be worn by visitors, and a series of magnetic plates, hidden under a carpet floor, which created a magnetic force field. The belt reacted to the magnetic field and was able to change the direction and control the movement of the one wearing it. The visitor could either succumb to the force of the belt, or try to resist it, although this was very difficult to do.

In the Gallery 2 selection of different projects were presented including *MeYouandUs* by Alastair Eilbeck and James Bailey, an interactive installation which displayed on a large plasma screen digitally manipulated video images from the gallery,<sup>34</sup> and a digital rendition of Pepper Ghost trick,<sup>35</sup> creat-



Fig. 17 Karina Smigla Bobinski, *ADA*, 2010. Installation view, Gallery 1. *Robots and Avatars*. FACT, 2012. Image courtesy of FACT.

32 Smigla-Bobinski, 2004. 'ADA'. Online. Available at: <http://www.smigla-bobinski.com/works/Ada.html>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

33 See FACT, 2014. 'Lawrence Malstaf – Compass'. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/robots-and-avatars/lawrence-malstaf-compass.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

34 FACT, 2014. 'Alistair Eilbeck and James Bailey – MeYouAndUS'. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/robots-and-avatars/alastair-eilbeck-and-james-bailey-meyouandus.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

35 Pepper's ghost is an illusion technique used in theatre, which uses plate glass and lighting to make objects seem to appear or disappear or morph into another. See The Filmmakers Workshop, 2013. 'Practical Effects Classics. Peppers Ghost Effect. How To Do Peppers Ghost'. Online. Available at: <http://www.thefilmmakersworkshop.com/practical-effects-classics-peppers-ghost-effect-how-to-do-peppers-ghost/>. Accessed: July 20, 2013.



Fig. 18 Lawrence Malstaf, *Compass* 2005. Co-produced and presented by FACT and body>data>space in *Robots and Avatars*, 2012. Installation view, Gallery 1, FACT. Photographer: Brian Slater. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 19 Chris Sugrue, *Base 8*, 2011. Co-produced and presented by FACT and body>data>space in *Robots and Avatars*, 2012. Installation view, Gallery 2, FACT. Photographer: Brian Slater. Image courtesy of FACT.

ing virtual representations of body akin to holographic illusions (*Base 8*, Chris Sugrue).<sup>36</sup> There were a series of monitor-based projects including *Rep.licants.org* (by Matthieu Cherubini), a web service which offers to simulate and enhance one's web's activity on social networks,<sup>37</sup> and an online game *Naked on Pluto* (by Aymeric Mansoux, Dave Griffiths, Marloes de Volk), in which subscribers to the game played against virtual agents harvesting personal data from gamer's online environments.<sup>38</sup>

In the foyer space on the ground floor a person sized talking robot was installed. The robot spoke out loud text messages, which were sent by the audience to a dedicated number.<sup>39</sup> The exhibition was accompanied by a series of events and discussions, as well as a performance *Public Avatar*, which enabled users logged in online to give instructions and to control, in real-time, a 'human test subject'.<sup>40</sup>

*Robots and Avatars* attracted significant attention and press coverage.<sup>41</sup> Alongside many press features and reviews, BBC Click TV – a programme dedicated to new technologies – presented a full episode (30 minutes) covering *Robots and Avatars*, filmed at FACT. Most of the reviews focused on explaining the different works and on the novelty and experimental aspects and the discussion on human-robotic relationship. The idea for the exhibition certainly encapsulated FACT's ambition to present work at the cutting edge of technology, design, art and society. However, the exhibition also fully demonstrated the difficulties of accommodating experimental work in the traditional exhibition framework.

The show was plagued with technical problems; the main piece in Gallery 1 – *Compass* – was not operational for majority of the show's duration, with the exception of two first weeks. For the rest of the time, a documentary of a performance using the *Compass* was screened in the gallery. *ADA*, the inflatable drawing globe also needed maintenance as it was regularly deflated and had to be replaced part way through the run of the exhibition. Pieces which were expected to deliver a significant interactive aspect of the show, such as the *Vision of Our Communal Dreams*, required a more sustained engagement (creating account on an online virtual reality server, building one's avatar etc.)<sup>42</sup> which therefore made it more difficult to interact with. The online-based works, which were displayed on a series of monitors in Gallery 2, also required certain amount of time to work out the basis of the project, and without the guidance from the Gallery Assistants, were difficult for the audience to engage with.<sup>43</sup>

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36 See FACT, 2014. 'Chris Sugrue – Base 8.' Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/robots-and-avatars/chris-sugrue-base-8.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

37 FACT, 2014. 'Matthieu Cherubini – Rep.licants.org.' Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/robots-and-avatars/matthieu-cherubini-replicantsorg.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

38 See FACT, 2014. 'Aymeric Mansoux, Dave Griffiths, Marloes de Valk – Naked on Pluto.' Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/robots-and-avatars/aymeric-mansoux,-dave-griffiths-and-marloes-de-valk-naked-on-pluto.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

39 FACT, 2014. 'Martin Bricelj Baraga – RoboVox.' Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/robots-and-avatars/martin-bricelj-baraga-robvox.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

40 See FACT, 2014. 'Martin Bricelj Baraga and Slavko Glamocianin – Public Avatar.' Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/robots-and-avatars/martin-bricelj-baraga-and-slavko-glamocianin-public-avatar.aspx>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

41 For selection of press coverage and reviews See *Robots and Avatars*, 2014. 'Exhibition. Press.' Online. Available at: [http://www.robotsandavatars.net/exhibition/robotsandavatars\\_fact/press/](http://www.robotsandavatars.net/exhibition/robotsandavatars_fact/press/). Accessed: January 20, 2014.

42 The instruction for participation in *Visions of Our Communal Dream* is a multi page document. See Magruder, T. 2012. 'Visions of Our Communal Dream. Virtual Participation Set up Guide.' [PDF]. Online. Available at: [http://www.robotsandavatars.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/V OCD\\_virtual-participation-guide\\_v1.0\\_web-copy1.pdf](http://www.robotsandavatars.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/V OCD_virtual-participation-guide_v1.0_web-copy1.pdf). Accessed: June 30, 2013.

43 FACT, 2012. 'Robots and Avatars. Evaluation meeting notes.' Available from FACT hard drive. [no pagination].

Reading FACT's internal evaluation notes regarding *Robots and Avatars* reveals other factors, that contributed to some of the difficulties with the final outcome of the exhibition. It becomes clear that the exhibition was a smaller version of what was originally anticipated due to the body<data>space last minute funding issues, which resulted in significant cut to the exhibition's anticipated budget. This resulted in two major new commissions not being able to be completed in time.<sup>44</sup> The notes also reveal some of the problems and contingencies of working in collaboration with various partners, in which the curatorial decisions as well as different aspects of work development and production were shared between a larger group of people, which made it more difficult to coordinate the work flow.<sup>45</sup>

### **3.1.3. Exhibition as a studio, a lab and a social space – Climate for Change March – May 2009**

*Climate for Change* was a response to Liverpool Year of the Environment.<sup>46</sup> However, instead of presenting environmental art, or debating the dangers of the climate change, the exhibition attempted to create a space for 'discourse and action'.<sup>47</sup> The curatorial statement posed a question, which was a starting point for the exhibition:

'There is a *Climate for Change* in the air. The 21st century has finally hit and affected two global giants – "peak oil" implies the hydrocarbon economy is on its last legs, while the collapse of international finance shows that "peak credit" has also arrived. The question is: what is our collective response?'<sup>48</sup>

In order to facilitate the debate, Gallery 1 was designated as a social space, open for local groups to host their own events and workshops. The idea was to invite 'people who understand how to exist outside of systems' and open FACT as a space for grassroots networks, makers' culture and the practices of self-organisation.<sup>49</sup> Apart from its function as a social centre, Gallery 1 served also as a gallery space and a studio lab for artists, invited to take up residency at FACT during the exhibition. Presented in the gallery were Stefan Szczelkun's *Survival Scrapbooks: Food, Energy and Shelter* (1972-74) which were 'd-i-y manuals for autonomous living, covering practical topics from bio-diesel making to increasing your 'chi',<sup>50</sup> and a collection of zin magazines.

One of these residencies, which took place in Gallery 1, was a result of a partnership between FACT and Eyebeam, the New York based art and technology centre.<sup>51</sup> The collaboration with FACT combined the focus on sustainability (which was also one of Eyebeam's research threads) with Eyebeam's Road Show presentation format, which includes talks and workshops present-

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44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 See FACT, 2009. 'Climate for Change. Gallery Guide.' [PDF]. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/media/5989228/Climate%20for%20Change%20gallery%20guide%20low%20res.pdf>. Accessed: July 30, 2013.

47 Corcoran, H. 2013. Interviewed by the author, May 22.

48 FACT, 'Climate for Change Gallery Guide.' p. 2.

49 Corcoran, H. interviewed by the author.

50 FACT, 'Climate for Change Gallery Guide.' p. 2.

51 Eyebeam is leading institution for presenting media arts, supporting artistic experimentations with technologies. It developed a strong lab culture, built through their fellowships and artistic residencies programmes. See Eyebeam, 2014. 'About. History and Mission.' Online. Available at: <http://eyebeam.org/about>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

ing the work of Eyebeam artists to different audiences all over the world.<sup>52</sup> *Sustainability Road Show* involved artists and staff from Eyebeam residing at FACT for two to three weeks during the exhibition.<sup>53</sup> The projects, which resulted from the residency included workshops for fixing and hacking iPods; a video debate between young people from New York and Liverpool discussing issues regarding environment and global warming as well as the current political situation, and an installation documenting answers of Liverpool residents to a question about the future of Liverpool, mapped onto the gallery wall.<sup>54</sup> Apart from the Eyebeam artists, other residents of *Climate for Change* included FACT's *tenantspin*, Liverpool-based Kazimier Collective, studio space C.U.T.S and artist-led environmental group the Gaia Project.

Gallery 2 was dedicated to a more traditional presentation function. The works on display shared visions of the future, both utopian and dystopian. The works shown were: Melanie Gilligan's film *Crisis in the Credit System* (2008), a fictional drama about investment banking;<sup>55</sup> the *New York Times – Special Edition* (2008) by the Yes Men, announcing the end of Iraq war, and the introduction of reforms such as national health care in the US;<sup>56</sup> and Nik Kosmas and Daniel Keller's (*AIDS 3D*) installation using an old computer terminal with classic 98 Windows screensaver, which was set as dusty relict of the past.

A further two pieces were shown in the FACT foyer: *SHOP* and *Ghana Think Tank*. *SHOP* was a swap shop initiative by art collective N55 which, according to the artists, encouraged 'community self-reliance through collaboration and sharing outside the motivation of profit', and proposed an 'alternative economy which functions based on gifts, exchange, donations'.<sup>57</sup> *Ghana Think Tank*, which is an ongoing initiative, is based around a network of think tanks set up in order to come up with and discuss new strategies to resolve local problems, while reversing the first-third-world order of exchange.<sup>58</sup> In the project presented at FACT, visitors were encouraged to leave their problems in a suggestion box, which were then shared with activists in Ghana, Mexico, Cuba, Serbia, Ethiopia and El Salvador, who discussed and proposed possible solutions. Examples of solutions to Liverpool residents' problems included d-i-y bollards to prevent cars parking on the sidewalks, or sunshine umbrellas as an antidote to the allegedly miserable Liverpool weather.<sup>59</sup>

*Climate for Change* was an interesting example of experimentation with the gallery format. The notion of space, which combines the different functions of artists' studio, exhibition and social space is indebted to the lab idea, and as the curator of the exhibition recalls, the show was an attempt to

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52 See Eyebeam, 2014. 'Sustainability.' Online. Available at: <https://eyebeam.org/research/sustainability>. Accessed: January 30, 2013.

53 Residents at FACT were: artists Steve Lambert, Jeff Crouse, and Hans Christoph Steiner and Eyebeam staff members Amanda McDonald Crowley, Jamie O'Shea, and Paul Amitai. See Eyebeam, 2014. 'Climate for Change.' Online. Available at: <http://eyebeam.org/events/climate-for-change>. Accessed: January 30, 2014.

54 Eyebeam, 'Climate for Change.'

55 FACT, 2014. 'Crisis in the Credit System.' Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/climate-for-change/crisis-in-the-credit-system.aspx>. Accessed: January 30, 2014.

56 FACT, 2014. 'New York Times – Special Edition.' Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/climate-for-change/new-york-times-special-edition.aspx>. Accessed: January 30, 2014.

57 FACT, 'Climate for Change Gallery Guide' p. 3.

58 See Ghana Think Tank, 2013. 'About Us.' Online. Available at: <http://ghanathinktank.org/>. Accessed: July 21, 2013.

59 For details of 'problems' in Liverpool See Ghana Think Tank, 2009. 'Liverpool Summary Video.' [blog]. Online. Available at: <http://ghanathinktank.blogspot.com/2009/05/liverpool-summary-video.html>. Accessed: July 21, 2013.





Fig. 20 FACT, Eyebeam, *Sustainability Road Show*. 2009. Installation view, Gallery 1. *Climate for Change*, FACT, 2009. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 21 Stefan Szczelkun, *Survival Scrapbooks*, artist presentation. Gallery 1. *Climate for Change*, FACT, 2009. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 22 Collection of zines. Installation view, Gallery 1. *Climate for Change*, FACT, 2009. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 23 Nick Kosmas, Daniel Keller (AIDS 3D), *Forever*, 2009. Installation view, Gallery 2. *Climate for Change*, FACT, 2009. Image courtesy of FACT.





Fig. 24 N55, *SHOP*, 2002. Installation view, FACT foyer. *Climate for Change*, FACT, 2009. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 25 *Ghana Think Tank*, d-i-y bollards on a Liverpool street. *Climate for Change*, 2009. Image courtesy of Ghana Think Tank.

bring the ways of working of media lab and makers culture into FACT.<sup>60</sup> In the show the emphasis shifted from the presentation of artwork to the process of production and exchange. The visitors to the gallery 1 could see the artists and collectives at work, and were invited to take part in debates, workshops and activities. The exhibition was conceived as a work-in-progress; an event, which evolved through the work of the gallery *users* (artist, collectives, communities).

Focusing on the process however presented certain challenges. One of them, pointed out by Sarah Cook in her review of the exhibition, was how to engage the general visitors to the gallery with the ongoing creative process, and what was the audience to gain from walking into a gallery space re-configured as a residency, or lab space.<sup>61</sup> The show itself was not free from contradictions either, as pointed out by Cook, who saw inconsistency between process-focused narrative of the exhibition and elements of traditional gallery model display of some other works including the spoof of New York Times by the Yes Man.<sup>62</sup> Accommodating international artistic residencies within gallery exhibition format and timeframe also presented challenges. Few weeks proved to be a short time to get involved with the local context in a meaningful way, which made the residencies less fruitful than anticipated.<sup>63</sup>

Although there was little attention given to the show in the press it drew the attention of curators, as evidenced on CRUMB discussion list, which touched on fundamental aspects of FACT's approach.<sup>64</sup> Already quoted Sarah Cook posed the question as to 'why FACT was taking on lab-residency based activity, with a direct social/government agenda (climate change), which other organisations might be better resourced and more appropriately positioned to fulfill' and criticised the fact that as one of few exhibition spaces in the UK equipped to show media art it was deciding to present activities which could be shown in other spaces.<sup>65</sup>

### 3.1.4. Summary and Discussion

Historically, the exhibitions programme was dominated by screen-based and experimental work that emerged out of video art. The cinematic 'black box' design of FACT's gallery spaces is traditionally associated with film and media and lends itself to presentation of those artistic formats. Recent exhibitions reveal a strong focus on experimental work, at the intersection of art, design, technology and social engagement. The works commissioned for and presented in the *Robots and Avatars* exhibition employed a wide range of technologies including robotics, mobile and locative media, virtual reality, gaming, online and software-based work. *Climate for Change*, inspired by maker's culture and media activism, combined new media tools with a strong focus on social and political activism and community engagement.

However, presenting interactive, experimental forms within exhibition format caused many problems, and FACT's recent history of exhibitions is filled with examples of malfunctioning technology (e.g. *Robots and Avatars*). Technological complexity and unsustainability is not the only issue with

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<sup>60</sup> Corcoran, Interviewed by the author.

<sup>61</sup> Cook, S. 2009. 'Lab/Time-based residencies and environmental response.' CRUM discussion list. March 17. Online. Available at: <http://www.crumbweb.org/discItemDetail.php?&useArch=1&archID=4977&op=2&sublink=1&fromSearch=1&>. Accessed: July 21, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Corcoran, Interviewed by the author.

<sup>64</sup> Cook, 'Lab/Time-based residencies.'

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

more experimental works, which often require the audience to activate the piece by operating within technological parameters set by the artist. This kind of interaction requires that the work is clearly communicated, which often means a significant involvement of the Gallery Assistants, who need to explain and help the viewers engage with the technology, as well as the broader context of the work (e.g. work in *Robots and Avatars*).<sup>66</sup>

*Climate for Change* also envisaged the public not as passive viewers, but predominantly as *users* of the gallery, who – alongside artists and local communities in residence in Gallery 1 – were invited to participate in events, workshops and discussions running throughout the duration of the exhibition. This brought with it certain challenges. Turning an exhibition gallery into multipurpose space combining the functions of artists' studio, gallery, event and social space, raised questions as to how to engage the general public with an exhibition as on-going process. The exhibition as a time-space within which artists could produce new work (through residencies) also proved to be somewhat problematic due to the relatively short timeframe (in terms of artistic production) for international artists to engage and respond to the new context in a meaningful way.

Presenting more experimental, interactive, or process-based work within the traditional gallery exhibition format posed various challenges to curators at FACT, requiring novel approaches. Former curators at FACT Michael Connor and Omar Kholeif, who worked at FACT at different times, both suggested that there was not a clearly structured approach to curating exhibitions at FACT, which had its advantages, as it allowed freedom to explore and test ideas as well as experiment with different curatorial formats.<sup>67</sup> The unstructured curatorial model of working at FACT is perhaps a natural consequence of the experimental nature of the artwork commissioned and presented at FACT, requiring an openness and flexibility of curatorial approach.

However, based on observations, discussions with curators and analysis of examples of exhibitions, what actually seems to underpin a lot of curatorial work at FACT is a collaborative model of working. As mentioned above, the majority of exhibitions presented at FACT during the research period were curated in collaboration with other partners, or external curators. Large scale exhibitions and projects such as the *Nam June Paik* exhibition, or earlier FACT projects, such as *Sk-interfaces*, and the *Human Futures*, were all curated and produced in collaboration with other institutions, artists, and academics. Collaborative curatorial work is also the basis of the Liverpool Biennial and Abandon Normal Devices exhibitions at FACT.

The collaborative approach refers equally to the way projects are produced in collaboration with other institutions and external curators as well as with artists and communities as participants in the collaborative exhibition process. The *Robots and Avatars* exhibition provides an example of an external curatorial collaboration involving large-scale projects, which required significant collective institutional effort. *Climate for Change* was an attempt to curate FACT as a space of creative production, and a social space, in which the community groups and artists who took up the residency FACT, collaboratively shaped the show. Internal collaborations will be discussed in detail with regard to the *Turning FACT Inside Out* case study in Chapter 3.

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66 FACT, 2012. 'Robots and Avatars. Evaluation meeting notes.' Available from FACT hard drive. [no pagination].

67 Connor, M. 2013. Interviewed by the author, May 23; Kholeif, O. 2013. Interviewed by the author, July 26.

Collaborations, however, can be demanding. As discussed on the example of *Robots and Avatars* collaborations with multiple partners, relying on different sources of funding (sometimes with different conditions and constraints attached), and having different agendas and objectives, complicate the decision process. As pointed out in the *Robots and Avatars* exhibition evaluation document, the collective decision-making is perhaps most democratic process but may not necessarily lead to the production of most interesting, artistically, work.<sup>68</sup> Limitations and advantages of collaborative models of working will be further discussed with regard to the *Turning FACT Inside Out* case study in Chapter 4.

## 3.2. Collaboration and Engagement

### 3.2.1. Overview

The Collaboration programme was at the core of Moviola and then FACT from very early on. Initially developed as a series of community education and training projects, the programme was funded on a short-term basis in the run up to Video Positive and aimed 'to provide the communities of Merseyside access to Video Positive, and through this, access to cultural activity both as participants and makers'.<sup>69</sup> Around 1999, The Arts Council committed to funding a permanent post to develop an on-going programme, and the Collaborations, alongside Video Positive and MITES, became the core strands of FACT's (the renamed Moviola's) activities. The regularly funded position enabled the remit and ambition of the programme to be extended and Collaborations started commissioning new art projects with a particular focus on community-engaged practices involving a creative use of technology.

Clearly defined objectives around 'access, participation, process and representation',<sup>70</sup> allowed Collaborations to develop their own operational model and working methods and a strong programming focus with a certain degree of autonomy. The team worked on a project basis, fundraising



Fig. 26. Graham Harwood, 1995. *Rehearsal of Memory*. Installation view, Bluecoat, Video Positive 1995. Image courtesy of FACT.

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68 FACT, 'Robots and Avatars. Evaluation meeting notes.'

69 FACT. 2003. 'Collaboration Programme Policy.' Available on FACT hard drive. [no pagination].

70 Ibid.



Fig. 27 Kristin Lucas, *Celebrations for Breaking Routine*, 2003. Installation view, Gallery 1. FACT, 2003. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 28 Cory Archangel and Interchill, *Wellcome to the Infinite Chill Zone*, 2004. Installation view, FACT foyer, FACT, 2004. Image courtesy of FACT.

and developing activities with a wide range of partners across the city, including local government, schools, hospitals, community groups and other arts organisations.<sup>71</sup> The autonomous nature of the

<sup>71</sup> FACT. 2002. 'Collaboration Programme. Future Programme and Structure, Summer 2002'. Available on FACT hard drive. [no pagination].

Collaborations programme made it possible for them to continue with their operations during FACT's transition from agency to venue-based institution and maintain a functional distance from FACT's core organisational position.<sup>72</sup> However, the development of the building created a need to deliver a structured approach to engagement activities in order to support FACT's organisational aims and artistic vision. As Maria Brewster, who acted as Head of Collaborations at FACT (1994-2004), recalls:

'there was automatically also the expectation of providing access routes of interpretation, of traditional gallery education kind of work, public programmes, all of that kind of stuff as well. The building created a need for that kind of work. But it didn't necessarily gel exactly with the collaboration programme ethos. We tried to use that ethos of producing as well as consuming, of peer-led design, user engaged design of projects'<sup>73</sup>.

Collaborations' methods of working, its bottom-up approach, which placed emphasis on the participatory and collaborative design of projects, did not sit comfortably with the expectations of delivering engagement and interpretation for projects already formed within other parts of FACT's programming. Collaborations retained their commitment to their focus and ways of working, resulting in a separation, or lack of connection, between Collaborations and other strands of FACT programming. To certain extent, this separation is still present in FACT's programme to this day despite many attempts at integration.

Since its inception, Collaborations has produced a great variety of projects, ranging from educational work with schools, through workshops, training and community-based projects to new artistic commissions focused on participatory and collaborative practice. One of the most significant early projects produced by Moviola's Collaborations was Graham Harwood's *Rehearsal Of Memory*, 1995. The piece was an installation and interactive CD-Rom produced with the participation of patients and staff at Ashworth Mental hospital; a maximum-security unit located outside Liverpool. The CD-Rom allows the viewer to navigate through scanned images of body parts of the patients, triggering fragmented narratives of recorded memories, images, texts, pieces of information, paper clippings etc. Marks, scars, tattoos and wounds on patient bodies, which the viewer can choose to 'explore' with a click of the mouse, reveal stories of the Ashworth patients.<sup>74</sup>

*Rehearsal of Memory* was first shown during the Video Positive festival in 1995. It was initially presented as a large-scale interactive installation at the Bluecoat gallery and a year later it was produced as a CD-Rom. It became known as a seminal computer art piece and was shown widely nationally and internationally to much critical acclaim. One of the reasons why the piece made media art history was its medium specificity; as Harwood explains – the piece 'couldn't have been done any other way'.<sup>75</sup> The piece is basically a large database which, on a practical level it allowed for a large amount of data to be 'smuggled' out of the hospital, and on a formal level its hyperlinked structure reflects the fragmented narratives of 'rehearsing memory'.<sup>76</sup> The design of the interface, which gave the viewer, or navigator, of the CD-Rom limited options thereby creating claustrophobic sensibility, was also an important aspect of the project.

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72 Ibid.

73 Brewster, M. 2013. Interviewed by the author, April 16.

74 For analysis of Harwood's project See Stallabrass, J. 2003. 'Rehearsal of Memory.' In C. Doherty (ed.) 2003. *FACTOR 1995*. FACT: Liverpool. [no pagination].

75 Harwood, G. 2012. Interviewed by the author, June 28.

76 Harwood notes that it would take several hours to go through all the stories hidden within the piece and had the piece been done as a single narrative, the staff at Ashworth would have most likely objected to it, as too much sensitive data was being presented. Harwood, Interviewed by the author.



Harwood's piece is an interesting example in that as a Collaborations commission it also resulted in a ground-breaking artwork. Although created as part of patients wellbeing project a clear emphasis was placed on the final piece being artwork in its own right designed predominantly for a gallery context. Additionally, as the artist recalls, an unforeseen outcome was that new staff at Ashworth hospital were given the CD-Rom as a way to familiarise themselves with some of the stories and mental health issues of Ashworth patients.<sup>77</sup>

Other early successful Collaborations projects include: Kristin Lucas' *Celebration for Breaking Routine* (2003) exhibition, which presented videos and songs created with the participation of three girl bands from Liverpool; Nick Crowe's *Police Radio* (2003), a web radio station with playlists selected by police officers and created in collaboration with South Merseyside Police; or *Welcome to the Infinite Fill Zone* (2004), a green screen studio, where members of the public were invited to make their own music videos, produced by Cory Arcangel and young people from Interchill.<sup>78</sup> These projects were successful both in terms of the process, (created with participation of community groups) as well in terms of the fact that the final outcome; the artworks were well received by the public and by critics and were widely shown beyond FACT.<sup>79</sup>

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77 Harwood, Interviewed by the author.

78 FACT, 2003. 'Collaboration Programme. Review of Aims'. Available on FACT hard drive. [no pagination].

79 Kristin Lucas project was later shown at Plug In gallery in Basel (2003) and during Transmediale in Berlin (2004) and the artists received an Urban Visionaries Award for Emerging Talent (2003). Nick Crowe's *Police Radio* was later shown at ICA for *Beck's Futures* exhibition (2003). A video edit of Cory Arcangel's collaboration with Interchill entitled *Interchill @ FACT* made it into the Electronic Arts Intermix collection.



Fig. 29. *Tenantspin* studio, 2002. Image courtesy of *Tenantspin*.



Fig. 30. *Tenantspin On Tour*, broadcasting studio in Tate Liverpool during *The Fifth Floor. Ideas Taking Place* exhibition, 2009. Image courtesy of *Tenantspin*.



### 3.2.2. Tenantspin

2000 – 2013

One of the most important community engagement projects, which has become FACT trademark, co-defining its identity and shaping its operations, is Liverpool based community TV project *Tenantspin*. Initiated by FACT in collaboration with Arena Housing, *Tenantspin* was one of the first community media projects to produce online webcasts.

The history of *Tenantspin* goes back to 1993 when the Housing Action Trust (HAT) was set up to improve the conditions of social housing in some of the most deprived council estates.<sup>80</sup> At the core of the Liverpool HAT operations was involvement with the tenants, who were consulted on all areas of the HAT's remit including housing management and community development. With 70% of the tenants being over 60 years of age, preserving of the community during and after the regeneration of their housing, was at the top of HAT's agenda.<sup>81</sup> HAT envisaged that one of the means of sustaining the engagement of community members would be through their involvement in art projects.<sup>82</sup> In 1999, soon after the establishment of a permanent Collaborations position at FACT, HAT and FACT's team came together to discuss the possibility of collaborating on a project involving the tenants. New media seemed to offer a perfect platform for tenants' involvement in HAT's operations, enabling a broad consultation process to take place while keeping the members of community connected (virtually and actually) together.<sup>83</sup>

FACT proposed to commission the Danish artists collective SUPERFLEX, whose socially engaged practice fuses art, activism, design and commercial enterprise. SUPERFLEX describe their projects as 'tools'; 'a tool is a model or proposal that can actively be used and further utilized and modified by the user.'<sup>84</sup> Thus, in 2000, SUPERFLEX were invited to pilot one of their tools – a broadcasting platform 'Superchannel' – for the use of the tenants community. A group of residents of Coronation Court, one of Liverpool's oldest tower blocks, was trained in broadcasting and started to produce online shows on a variety of subjects focused initially on the redevelopment plans and the issues at stake. The project provided an important platform for debate and a way of keeping the community together, as Patrick Fox, asserts

'the late 90's context was the displacement of large groups of elderly people, moving to different parts of the city and from the relative security of living high up in the air to negotiating different living environments. What Superflex proposed was to create a constant in amongst the turmoil, something that would remain a fixture in the lives of these residents despite geographical changes, a space where debate, discussion, support and shared experience would continue – a virtual space'.<sup>85</sup>

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80 HAT was set up under Housing Act 1988. In total six Housing Action Trusts were established across the country. Liverpool Housing Association was the largest of them; it took over administration of 67 tower blocks, with over 5000 properties. Its role was to assess and improve the housing and social conditions in high-rise council blocks across Liverpool. Only 11 blocks out of 67 remained, and underwent a major refurbishment. 56 blocks were demolished, their former residents were relocated to newly built houses across the city.

81 Fox, P. 2004. 'Tenantspin – A Case Study. New Adventures in Online Community Television/The Revolution Will Be Webcasted.' Available on FACT hard drive. p. 2.

82 Ibid., p. 2.

83 Ibid., p. 3.

84 SUPERFLEX, 2013. 'SUPERFLEX. Information.' Online. Available at: <http://superflex.net/information/>. Accessed: December 11, 2013. Since its beginnings in 1993, SUPERFLEX have developed a variety of tools, including projects such as 'Supergas', a portable biogas unit, producing gas from organic waste developed for rural communities in Tanzania.

85 Fox, 'Tenantspin – A Case Study'. p. 3.

After successful beginnings of Superchannel in the Coronation Court tower block, the project was extended to include the residents of all 67 tower blocks across the city. The project was renamed *Tenantspin* as all aspects of the operations had been taken over by the tenants, led by artist Alan Dunn, and with support from FACT and Arena Housing. 'Everything that you see on *Tenantspin* has been developed, produced and promoted by tenants. That means research, camera work, computer operation, publicity, presentation, training and studio management!' <sup>86</sup>

Over the years *Tenantspin* has produced over 1000 hours of broadcast, debating a huge variety of social, environmental and political issues. <sup>87</sup> *Tenantspin* has become FACT's most successful long-term public engagement project, recognised nationally and internationally as an exemplary model linking art and community and of participatory practice driven by the community. <sup>88</sup> Superchannel and *Tenantspin* were launched before the advent of Web 2.0, YouTube and other online media platforms which allow for collaborative content creation and self-publishing. It was ground-breaking as an experiment in social engagement and a test case for the democratic potential of new media tools. <sup>89</sup>

*Tenantspin* has evolved over time. It started as a community project with a strong artistic and curatorial lead by Alan Dunn, as well as clearly formulated social and political agenda resulting in interesting juxtapositions of community engagement, art and social activism. In recent years *tenantspin* has lost some of its energy and commitment to art making and has moved more into the realm of community art focused on social agency. <sup>90</sup> This loss of creative energy is partially due to lack of staff on the ground with time to develop new projects and look for new funding opportunities. <sup>91</sup> Additionally, although the durational, cumulative way of working focused strongly on one community created sustained engagement and strong ties within the group and between the group and FACT, the familiarity and 'closeness' of the group also posed certain problems; *Tenantspin* was directed towards the older generation and as the project went on some of the core members died which had a devastating impact on such closely knit group and contributed to a loss of enthusiasm for the project and gradual dissipation of the group spirit. <sup>92</sup> The factors discussed above contributed to the project drawing to a close in the late 2013, after 13 years of running.

*Tenantspin* has not only been a ground-breaking experiment linking art community and new media, but also played an important role in establishing a successful model of sustained community engagement at FACT, providing a template of producers' praxis for all areas of the Collaborations Department including Education, Young People and *Healthy Spaces*. The *Tenantspin* team have also assumed the role of advisors on issues of social engagement within FACT and often act as consultants and collaborators on other FACT projects such as those within the *Healthy Spaces* programme.

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<sup>86</sup> Steiner, B. 2003. *Superflex Tools*. Dusseldorf: Buchhandlung Walther Konig. p. 91.

<sup>87</sup> Fox, 'Tenantspin – A Case Study,' p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> See for example Frogget, L., at al. 2011. *New Model Visual Arts Organisations & Social Engagement*. Preston: University of Central Lancashire. pp. 51-52.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>90</sup> Yates, L. and Pink, E 2012. Interviewed by the author, December 14.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

### 3.2.3. Commissioning for community – *Healthy Spaces*

#### ongoing since 2009

The *Healthy Spaces* programme was established as part of the Decade of Health and Wellbeing initiative, which is a cultural policy strategy aimed 'to improve health and reduce inequalities in the Liverpool region through a programme of arts and cultural activities'.<sup>93</sup> The *Healthy Spaces* programme includes *Waiting Room* commissions, *In Hospital* commissions and *Participatory Projects*.<sup>94</sup> The *Waiting Room* and *In Hospital* commissions involve producing artworks for health centres across the city 'to enhance the environment of health centre *Waiting Rooms* to create spaces that offer distraction from the task of waiting'.<sup>95</sup>

Similar to a commissioning agency model, the *Healthy Spaces* team act as consultants and producers of projects commissioned by public organisations. Compared to other FACT projects, *Healthy Spaces* is relatively large and complex involving many partners and stakeholders including the Primary Care Trust (PCT), hospitals, local communities, the City Council, the developers as well as the artists. The parameters of the projects are predetermined by a brief provided by the funders: Liverpool PCT and hospitals, which the projects are commissioned for. The role of the *Healthy Spaces* team at FACT is to propose artists and projects to the funders according to the specifications provided, to co-define the project with the artist in agreement with the funders and in consultation with communities, then deliver the artwork within the time and budget constraints.

FACT has commissioned (on behalf of the Liverpool and Sefton Health Partnership), established UK and international artists and designers working with digital media in the public realm to create works within health centres which were either newly built, or being refurbished. So far, since the beginning of the *Healthy Spaces* programme in 2009, FACT has delivered 17 installations including 13 new commissions.<sup>96</sup> The projects range from interactive installations, light sculptures and sound pieces, to a large-scale architectural work such as a community garden. Few of the projects included already existing pieces, but the majority of works were specifically commissioned for particular spaces. Some of the projects were created in partnerships with community groups.

One example of a project created in consultation with and, by means of the participation of, the community is Alistair Eilbeck's *26,14,17* piece (2012) placed in Townsend NHS Neighbourhood Health Centre. The work is an interactive installation consisting of two screens displaying video portraits of people waiting at a local bus stop (the title refers to local bus routes numbers). The video portraits dissolve into collage clusters of images based on the bus theme when a sensor picks up the movement of the viewer. The images are accompanied by audio of short interviews of local people, fed through a directional speaker which is only audible to people standing in front of the installation.<sup>97</sup> The project was produced in partnership with a community steering group. Through a series of workshops set up by *Tenantspin*, members of local communities from the Townsend neighbourhood discussed and informed the ideas for the piece, and participated in the production of the

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93 The Year of Health and Wellbeing, 2013. 'Decade of Health and Wellbeing 2020. Home'. Online. Available at: <http://www.2020healthandwellbeing.org.uk/index.php>. Accessed: March 12, 2013.

94 FACT, 2009. 'Healthy Spaces Programme'. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 1.

95 Ibid., p. 2.

96 FACT, 2012. 'Healthy Spaces Business Plan, 2013-2015'. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 3.

97 Alistair Eilbeck, 2013. '26,14,17'. Online. Available at: <http://alastair-eilbeck.co.uk/wp/?p=68>. Accessed: July 25, 2013.



Fig. 31 Alastair Eilbeck, 26, 14, 17, 2012. Townsend NHS Neighbourhood Health Centre. Image courtesy of *Healthy Spaces*.



Fig. 32 Scott Snibbe, *Three Drops*, 2008. Picton Neighbourhood Health & Children Centre. Image courtesy of *Healthy Spaces*.

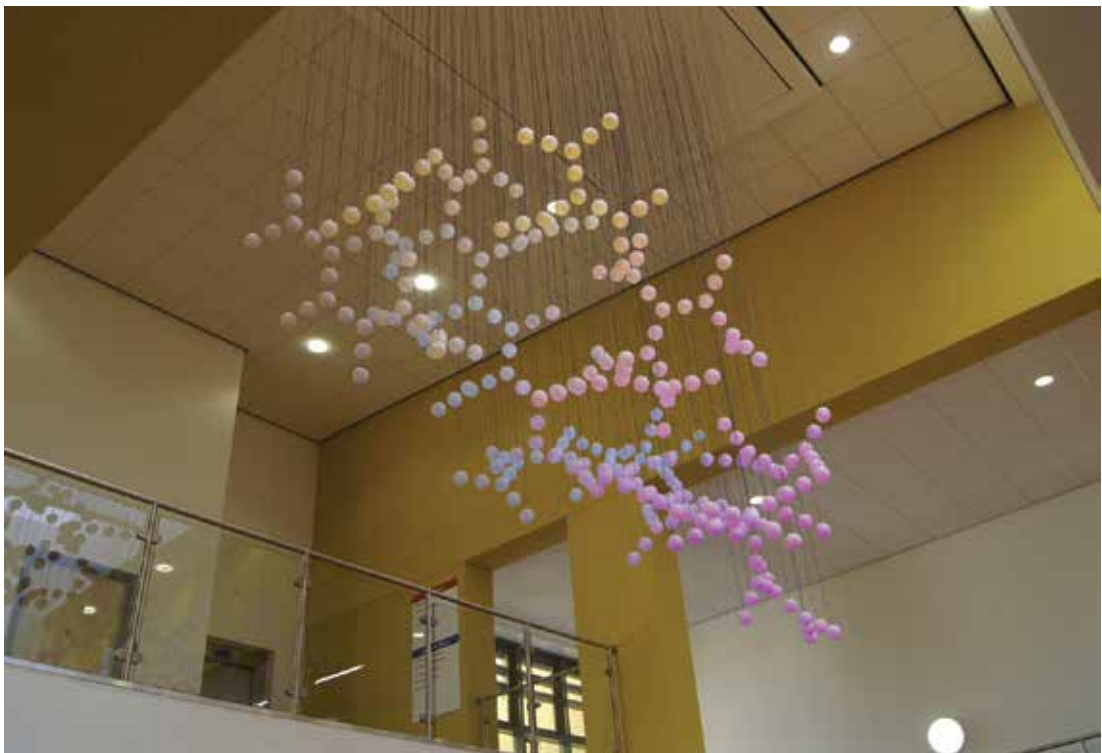


Fig. 33 Blendid, *Wixel Cloud*, 2007. Speke Neighbourhood Health Centre. Image courtesy of *Healthy Spaces*.

work.<sup>98</sup> Members of community collected images of the local area, including archival images, and made audio recordings, some of them including the memories of people living in the area.<sup>99</sup>

Apart from the projects, like the one discussed above, commissioned specifically for a particular space, and in consultation with and collaboration of local communities, The *Waiting Room* projects, especially the early ones, included already existing pieces, which were placed into new or refurbished spaces. Examples include 3 D light sculpture composed of cloud like formation of colourful pixels (*Wixel Cloud* by Blendid, Speke NHS Neighbourhood Health Centre) or interactive installation for children's play area, in which the movement of patients triggered animation projected onto a wall (*Three Drops* by Scott Snibbe Picton Neighbourhood Health & Children's Centre).

Working within the same context – of new media commissions for healthy centres – over a long period of time has allowed for a maturation of the approach. *Healthy Spaces* went from 'retrofitting' already existing work such as *Wixel Cloud* or *Tear Drops* to commissioning new site-specific projects.<sup>100</sup> A recently conducted study of the *Healthy Spaces* projects highlighted some useful points regarding the commissioning process.<sup>101</sup> The study pointed out the importance of consulting local communities and staff at hospitals very early in the commissioning process, as well as the advantages of creating site-specific work designed for particular places rather than installing an existing work. This was deemed to be conducive to a greater 'sense of ownership' of the project by the community and staff working at the hospital.<sup>102</sup> The evaluation and its findings have informed the strategy of *Healthy Spaces* going forward, involving a renewed emphasis on a collaborative way of working.<sup>103</sup>

Working on complex projects such as site-specific commissions for new or existing building presents various challenges. The small team at FACT assigned to each project assume the roles and responsibilities of commissioners, producers, project managers as well as negotiators between different stakeholders. This necessarily places a significant pressure on team members.<sup>104</sup> The highly complex nature of many of the *Healthy Spaces* commissions has caused many technical maintenance problems and raised the question of who is responsible for the maintenance where does the budget for this come from.<sup>105</sup> *Healthy Spaces* coordinators noted that some of the partners lack an understanding of what media works are, and have unrealistic expectations regarding the operation and sustainability of the projects.<sup>106</sup> Works created in collaboration with a community and intended as a community platform, for example Alastair Eilbeck's project *26,14,17*, in which new content can be constantly generated, have also raised questions as to who is responsible for maintaining the community involvement with the project.<sup>107</sup>

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98 See Tenantspin, 2013. 'Townsend Lane Health Centre.' Online. Available at: <http://www.tenantspin.org/2012/07/02/townsend-lane-health-centre-is-open/>. Accessed: July 25, 2013.

99 Ibid.

100 Dempsey, K. 2013. Interviewed by the author. April 2.

101 Roy, A., Manley, J., Frogget, L. 2012. *An Evaluation of the Healthy Spaces Programme*. Preston: University of Central Lancashire.

102 Ibid., p. 32.

103 FACT, 'Healthy Spaces Business Plan.' p. 7.

104 Williams, A. and Gee, E. 2013. Interviewed by the author, March 12.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

107 See Roy et al., *An Evaluation of the Healthy Spaces Programme*. p. 21.



Fig. 34. *Veterans in Practice* workshop. Image courtesy of Healthy Spaces.

Another strand of the *Healthy Spaces* programme focuses on developing and facilitating participatory projects and includes community wellbeing project, directed at veterans called *Veterans in Practice* (VIP), which was commissioned by the Liverpool Primary Care Trust with support of NHS Merseyside and the Liverpool Veterans Project (LVP). The aim of the project was to 'to provide creative activity for veterans in Liverpool',<sup>108</sup> combining a strong focus on enhancing veterans' wellbeing, self-esteem and social inclusion with producing a high quality artwork.<sup>109</sup>

The project began in March 2012, when FACT secured the funding. It was necessary to develop a closer relationship with LVP in order to establish a group of veterans interested in participating in the *Veterans in Practice*. The decision was made to produce initially a 'highly accessible' project, which would help to draw veterans into FACT.<sup>110</sup> Collaborations commissioned Stuart Griffiths, social documentary photographer, and an ex-soldier to work with the veterans to produce digital photographs and animation, relating to the experience of the veterans.<sup>111</sup> By means of the original commission, a format for the project was established; a group of veterans (currently 11 persons) meet weekly at FACT and engage in and develop creative projects in collaboration with different artists including photographers, animators, sounds artists, online artists, painters and writers. The projects and activities range from workshops (animation, photography, digital editing), film screenings, discussions, visits to cultural events (plays, exhibitions), as well as getting involved in FACT's other engagement projects. Recently, the Veterans have also been involved with the Battle of the Atlantic 70th Anniversary celebrations across the city, contributing photographs, films and interviews.<sup>112</sup>

108 FACT, 2012. 'Veterans in Practice. Update Report'. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 1.

109 Ibid., p. 1.

110 Ibid., p. 2.

111 Ibid., pp. 3-4.

112 Veterans in Practice, 2013. 'Battle of the Atlantic Heroes.' [blog]. Online. Available at: <https://veteransin-practice.wordpress.com/2013/06/10/battle-of-the-atlantic-heroes/>. Accessed: March 13, 2013.



*Veterans in Practice* is an interesting example of a FACT project that is closer to social work and art therapy than community art. The focus of the project is to create an environment for the veterans to socialise, share their experiences while collaborating on production of artworks, as well as to help them in gaining confidence and assist in their return to civilian life. The emphasis is strongly on the process and duration, which helps the soldiers become confident co-authors of successive projects, although the quality of the final outcome, that is the artwork is also emphasised as important indicator of a successful project by the *Veterans in Practice* producers.<sup>113</sup>

Facilitating community well-being project, such as *Veteran in Practice* poses various challenges. One of them is the blurring of staff roles from being that of creative producer to social worker. Responses from FACT staff, who run *Veterans in Practice* project point out that facilitating the project brings with it a sense of responsibility for a group of people some of whom suffer from post-traumatic stress or experience social isolation, and for whom the project has a significance beyond the engagement in art remit. Some of the issues encountered during the facilitation of the project were challenging for the FACT team, and the parameters of the project needed to be adjusted in order to bring in a charity to help resolve the issues, personal, or other, which the veterans might be dealing with.<sup>114</sup>

### 3.2.4. Summary and discussion

The Collaborations model of working combines elements of context-responsive, durational and collaborative production models as discussed in the literature review. It is based on durational and cumulative way of working closely focused on a specific community and particular context (older generation, veterans, social housing and urban regeneration). In that sense, it 'responds' to the social, economic and political context of the city and its communities, particularly the more disenfranchised ones. There is also an element of educational praxis evident in *Tennantspin* and *Veterans in Practice* ways of working, particularly in their focus on training – both technology specific, as well as general skills development – and on providing alternative opportunities for discussion and learning. A strong belief in upskilling as a tool for empowerment and self-organised alternative pedagogy resonate with the ethos of DIY skilling linked to the culture of new media, with training and workshops being an important part of new media events; accompanying exhibitions and increasingly becoming part of festivals and conferences.

The work of Collaborations is highly focused on the process, and on participatory and collaborative modes of engagement, where the involvement of communities, or project participants, is the constitutive element of artwork. For the Collaborations team the important criteria of success are the quality of experience and the quality of the process by means of which the work is produced and developed. According to Kathryn Dempsey, Head of Collaborations at FACT, embedded in *Tennantspin*'s and *Veterans in Practice*'s way of working in an 'ethos of genuine collaboration'; successful projects are considered to be those, in which the participants are informing the process.<sup>115</sup> In this respect the work of Collaborations is highly focused on the ethics of engagement and the quality of the process and less concerned with the broader art world impact of the events.

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113 Willams, Gee, Interviewed by the author.

114 Ibid.

115 Dempsey, Interviewed by the author.



Despite the similarities (discussed above) between *Tennantspin* and *Veterans in Practice* there are significant differences between the two projects, especially with respect to the way in which they were originally envisaged and set up to run. *Tennantspin* started as a community project with a strong artistic and curatorial lead (by artist Alan Dunn) and a clearly defined format (Superflex TV), with time losing its creative edge and moving into the realm of community art and focused on its role in facilitating social agency. *VIP* started as a social engagement and wellbeing project with no clearly defined artistic output or format. The veterans themselves and in discussion with project facilitators from FACT determine the nature of their creative engagement. Although *Tennantspin*, especially in its earlier period, had a clear focus and functioned within specific context – providing a platform for older residents to engage in debates about their future housing – the project had much wider resonance as a ground-breaking experiment, which tested emerging media tools as a platform for discussion and citizen activism. *Tennantspin* later functioned as a city-wide channel for community led debate. In contrast, *Veterans in Practice* focuses on particular group of people and the challenges they face, aiming to help veterans return to civilian life, and regain their confidence through engagement with art. *Tennantspin* and *Veterans in Practice* share in common focus on the *process* of sustained engagement, collaboration with specific group for a longer period of time.

Duration was crucial for *Tennantspin* as it is for *Veterans in Practice* for a variety of reasons. The duration of *Tennantspin* allowed for the community involved in it to develop a set of skills, and become confident creative producers in their own right, assuming ownership of the project. It also allowed for maturation of the collaborative model of working with artists. The continuity of *Tennantspin* was also crucial, as it evidenced commitment and loyalty to working with particular community, as well as sustainability of the community working model.<sup>116</sup> In the context of the *Veterans in Practice* project, the duration is also a significant factor in achieving the goal of the project; that is to assist in the veteran's wellbeing. Facilitators of the *Veterans in Practice* project emphasise, that the duration of the project, and its regularity (weekly meetings) is very significant for the veterans, as this provides a certain 'constant' for them, helping to lessen their isolation.<sup>117</sup> The regularity also builds the veterans' trust in the project.<sup>118</sup>

Duration and continuity are also important for the team. The Collaborations team argue for longer time-frames when planning future budgets and activities as this would enable them to develop a long-term vision and strategy and to establish a stronger position in the city while showing commitment to the process of sustainable regeneration.<sup>119</sup> The durational, cumulative, approach is also evident in Collaborations' relationship with artists. The producers at FACT develop long-term relationships with artists, often working with the same artist on several projects.<sup>120</sup> This way they build a pool of artistic skills and experience on working in the community based, socially engaged context, which allows them to easily match the right project and the right artist, and ensure the quality of the process as well as the project.<sup>121</sup>

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116 See Tennantspin, 2013. 'What We Do. History.' Online. Available at: <http://www.tennantspin.org/what-we-do/history/#sthash.fpgORv11.dpuf>. Accessed: March 12, 2013.

117 Williams, Gee, Interviewed by the author.

118 Ibid.

119 See comment on *Tennantspin* web site: 'With so many regeneration agencies in Liverpool there is inevitably a high staff turnover which can send out completely the wrong message about sustainability and loyalty. Harding is correct to highlight the importance of commitment – and it is of interest at present to witness the high number of short-term "community jobs" that Liverpool's Capital of Culture status brings to the city.' Tennantspin, 2013. 'History.' Online. Available at: <http://www.tennantspin.org/what-we-do/history/>. Accessed: March 12, 2013.

120 Dempsey, Interviewed by the author.

121 Ibid.

Similarly to *Tennantspin* and *Veterans in Practice* *Healthy Spaces* is also context-responsive in the sense that the projects 'respond' to certain needs and a specific context, albeit one which is pre-defined by funding availability. The production model, developed within *Healthy Spaces*, is also characterised by collaborative ways of working. The commissioning process is based on collaborative decision-making, in which communities and stakeholders (developers, local authorities, hospitals staff etc.) come together at crucial stages of the production process (preparing the brief for the artists, the selection of projects) and collectively agree upon the parameters of the project.<sup>122</sup> FACT's staff members are essentially facilitators of the collaborative process, coordinators and producers of the work. An evaluation of the *Healthy Spaces* programme highlighted the importance of consulting local communities and staff at hospitals as this was deemed to be conducive to a greater engagement and sense of ownership of the project by the community and staff working at the hospital.<sup>123</sup>

Most of the projects produced by Collaborations are externally funded and making the projects sustainable over longer period of time requires a significant ongoing fundraising effort.<sup>124</sup> The fact that Collaborations need to fundraise for the projects often necessitates an alignment with government agendas. Both *Veterans in Practice* and the *Waiting Room* commissions are part of the Decade of Health and Wellbeing initiative of Liverpool City Council and the Liverpool Primary Care Trust. This can also mean being more opportunistic in the sense that the choice of focus is determined by available funding rather than an analysis of existing needs in the community or the city. As such, there is often an intrinsic tension between the Collaborations ways of working and the funding framework within which they operate. Projects such as *Healthy Spaces* and *Veterans in Practice* rely on public funding streams, which rarely guarantee a long-term, sustained level of subsidy, and the agendas of the government bodies responsible are susceptible to change.<sup>125</sup> Therefore it is difficult for *Healthy Spaces* and *Veterans in Practice* to plan their work on a long-terms basis, which is, in fact, what is essential to their working methodology.<sup>126</sup>

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122 Ibid.

123 Roy, at al., *An Evaluation of the Healthy Spaces Programme*. p. 32.

124 Williams, A, Gee, E. Interviewed by the author.

125 For example a reorganisation of the NHS (March 2013) in which the responsibility for managing NHS spending went from Primary Care Trusts to Clinical Commissioning Groups meant that *Healthy Spaces* and the *Veterans in Practice* needed to renegotiate the funding for their projects.

126 FACT, 'Healthy Spaces Business Plan'. p. 12.



Fig. 35 Eva and Franco Mattes, *Plan C*, 2010. Whitworth Park, Manchester, AND 2010. Image courtesy of AND.

### 3.3. Abandon Normal Devices Festival

#### 3.3.1. Overview

Abandon Normal Devices Festival (AND) was launched in 2009 as part of the wider North West programme of the Cultural Olympiad, funded by the Legacy Trust in the run up to the 2012 London Olympic games. Founded by three organisations in the North West: FACT, Cornerhouse (Manchester) and Folly (Lancaster) the festival was planned as a 4-year long programme of events in the region (Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire) with the main festival alternating yearly between Manchester and Liverpool.<sup>127</sup>

FACT played a leading role in setting up AND, as it had been working on a development of a new festival since 2001. In 2006 FACT commissioned a feasibility study into the shape of a festival for the region and subsequently, partnering up with Cornerhouse and Folly, secured funding from the Culture Company for the festival to take place in 2009. The mission of the newly established festival was:

'To welcome audiences to experience the best in new cinema and media art in a celebration that spills from screens and galleries into the streets and imaginations of the North West. AND exists to create a space where artists and filmmakers can offer striking new perspectives, and visitors can enjoy, discuss and interact with ideas, in a festival that questions the normal and champions a different approach.'<sup>128</sup>

127 FACT, Folly, Cornerhouse, 2008. 'Abandon Normal Devices. Festival of New Cinema and Digital Culture. Business Plan 2009-2012'. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 1.

128 Ibid., p. 4.



Fig. 36 Wafaa Billal, *Meme Junkyard: Technoviking*. 2012. Manchester, AND 2012. Image courtesy of AND.



Fig. 37 Brody Condon, *Level 5* performance, Bluecoat, Liverpool. AND 2011. Image courtesy of AND.





Fig 38. Kurt Hentschlager, *ZEE*, installation in Gallery 1 at FACT as part of AND 2011. Photographer: Brian Slater. Image courtesy of the artist.



Fig 39. Kazimier, *Atalonia – A Descent to Hollow Earth*. Pilkington's Warehouse, Liverpool. AND 211. Image courtesy of AND.

AND was envisaged as a cross platform festival featuring 'screening, installations, online projects, public realm interventions, workshops and life events.'<sup>129</sup> The festival's programme was built around the areas of expertise of the funding institutions such as web based and digital media (Folly), cin-

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129 Ibid., p. 4.



Fig. 40. Jeff Stark, Todd Chandler, *Empire Drive-In*. Q Park, Hulme Street, Manchester. AND 2012. Image courtesy of AND.

ema and contemporary art (Cornerhouse), film, video and new media (FACT). AND grew out of the convergence between those different programming areas, building on the strengths as well as the different skills sets within partnering organisations.<sup>130</sup> The funding organisations also provided staff, infrastructural and production support as well as a rich network of contacts and partners for AND to collaborate with.

Since its launch in 2009 AND has delivered 6 festivals: three in Liverpool (2009, 2011, 2013) two in Manchester (2010, 2012) and one in Grizedale Forest in Cumbria (spring 2010). In 2012, in addition to the main festival events in Manchester, AND also contributed to the celebrations marking the end of the Cultural Olympiad, which took place in early September in Preston.<sup>131</sup> Currently AND is in a transition period and after 2012, when the Cultural Olympiad funding finished, it has been operating as an art agency, and working towards developing a sustainable business and operating model for the future.

AND has commissioned and produced a large variety of artworks including film and video, architectural work, sculpture, installation, interventions, performance, theatre and music amongst others. The work is often hybrid and experimental combining different mediums or existing across different platforms. The work has been presented in variety of contexts and using diverse presentation formats – in galleries, in the public realm, on urban screens, as well as online, in screenings, workshops, live events, conferences and so on. Many of the artworks commissioned and presented by AND are novel and surprising, for example *Plan C* (by Eva and Franco Mattes, 2010), which involved installing

<sup>130</sup> Jenks, G, 2013. Interviewed by the author, April 19.

<sup>131</sup> For the summary of events See Arts Council, 2014. 'We Play Expo'. Online. Available at: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/news/arts-council-news/we-play-expo/>. Accessed: March 7, 2014.

a playground ride smuggled from Chernobyl in a park in Manchester,<sup>132</sup> or *Ask a Teenager* (by Mammalian Diving Reflex, 2012) in which panel of teenagers acted as advisors to members of the general audience in helping to solve their problems.<sup>133</sup> AND also presented work by famous prankster and media activist collective, the Yes Men, including a collection of their research material in a small exhibition format, and a lecture on 'how to be a Yes Men' delivered by the artists at the inaugural edition of the festival (September 2009).<sup>134</sup>

AND has been interested in critically examining the effects of technology on society. Projects such as flash USB cards embedded into walls around the city (*Dead Drops* by Aram Bartholl, AND 2011), enabling for offline file sharing addressed, in a humorous way, the relationship between cyberspace and physical public space.<sup>135</sup> An online game *Phone Story* (by Molleindustria, 2011), which AND co-commissioned, reveals 'the troubling supply chain' in the manufacture of mobile phones, such as coltan mines in Congo, exploitative labour in China, or e-waste in Pakistan, which are behind smartphones and 'gadget consumerism in the West'.<sup>136</sup> Another AND commission, *Meme Junkyard: Technoviking* by Wafaa Billal was an installation of a giant inflatable head, staged in a park in Manchester (AND 2012) that inflated and deflated depending on the interest it generated on twitter.<sup>137</sup>

AND has also tested different models of participation in art, producing work at the intersection of theatre, performance and live experiment, which often created surprising encounters. Brody Condon's *Level Five* (2011) was a 14 hour participatory performance, inspired by 'self-actualization seminars from the 1970s', in which a group of volunteers took part in real-live experiment (staged at Bluecoat gallery in Liverpool) which was live-streamed in gallery spaces next door.<sup>138</sup> *Atalonia – A Descent to Hollow Earth*, produced by the Kazimier collective, was an immersive performance, which took the audience on a tour of fantasyland Atalonia, created in one of Liverpool's warehouse, which featured large-scale installations of fantastic architectural structures and natural wonderland, completed with projection mapping, dance, music and followed by a party with live music and performance.<sup>139</sup>

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132 For more details See AND, 2014. 'Plan C/Eva and Franco Mattes.' Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/plan-c-eva-franco-mattes-ryan-doyle-and-others-2010/>. Accessed: February 20, 2014.

133 See AND, 2014. 'Ask a Teenager/Mammalian Diving Reflex.' Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/ask-a-teenager-mammalian-diving-reflex-2012/>. Accessed: February 20, 2014.

134 The Yes Man (Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno) is activist collective, who often pose as high powered corporate and local government executives, blagging their way into business and government meetings and conferences, making presentations that parody corporate world, or make statements that they consider should be made. They reached notoriety when Bichlbaum, posing as Dow Chemicals spokesperson, was invited to BBC News and announced that Dow would take responsibility and clean up the site of Bhopal disaster. In another famous hoax the Yes Man appeared on the Housing Summit in New Orleans, posing as a fictitious 'assistant' in US Dept. of the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and announced that HUD will reopen housing facilities, which had been closed since hurricane Katrina. See *The Yes Man Fix the World*, 2009. [Film] Directed by A. Bichlbaum and M. Bonnano. France, UK: Arte France, Renegade Pictures.

135 See AND, 2014. 'Dead Drops.' Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/blog/deaddrops/>. Accessed: February 20, 2014.

136 See AND, 2014. 'Phone Story.' Online. Available at: <http://www.phonestory.org/>. Accessed: February 20, 2014.

137 See AND, 2014. 'Behind the Scenes: Junkyard Meme.' Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/blog/behind-the-scenes-junkyard-meme/>. Accessed: February 20, 2014.

138 For more information and video See AND, 2014. 'Brody Condon Level Five.' Online. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8YhmLAobPg>. Accessed: February 21, 2014.

139 See AND, 2014. 'Atalonia – A Descent to Hollow Earth/Kazimier.' Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/atalonia-a-descent-to-hollow-earth-kazimere-2011/>. Accessed: February 21, 2014.

Another significant experimental work produced by AND was an immersive audiovisual environment, *Zee*, by Kurt Hentschlaeger, which was presented at FACT in 2011.<sup>140</sup> Gallery 1, which was filled with dense fog, completely obscuring the parameters of the space and the audience, led in by gallery assistants, experienced a 12 minute long show in which the pulsating stroboscopic lights created animated kinetic structures, which appeared to be surrounding the visitors, creating a hallucinatory architecture made of light. The installation proved to be very popular with the audience and has often been quoted as one of the most successful projects that FACT had put on show in the recent years.<sup>141</sup>

In this brief overview of projects produced by AND, it is important to highlight that the festival commissioned artist films as well as online based work. Online commissions, such as *Phone Story*, mentioned above, are significant especially given that it is still the case that few art organisations in the UK commission online based work and use their web sites as creative platforms.<sup>142</sup> AND's film commissions include feature films such as Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Primitive* (2009),<sup>143</sup> Andrew Cotting's *Swan-down* (2012),<sup>144</sup> Shezad Darwood's *Piercing Brightness*, (2013)<sup>145</sup> and Al and Al's *The Creator* (2012).<sup>146</sup> Films commissioned by AND include more experimental formats such as Gillian Wearing's *Self-Made* (2010) which was a documentary, a performance and a social experiment, involving a group of non-actors who undergo drama therapy,<sup>147</sup> or *Follow* by Tim Brunsden (2012) which is an ongoing online documentary.<sup>148</sup> Some of the films, such as Gillian Wearing *Self-Made*, toured to many art venues creating a legacy for AND, extending it beyond its temporality as a festival.<sup>149</sup> AND has also presented a rich and varied film programme, sometimes staging projections in unusual locations, including especially created drive-in cinemas (e.g *Empire Drive-In*, atemporary cinema built by Jeff Stark and Todd Chandler from shipping containers and scrapped cars as part of AND 2012 in Manchester).<sup>150</sup>

In the section that follows, two AND festival projects produced in collaboration with FACT, are discussed in more detail: *War Veteran Vehicle*, a large-scale public intervention by Krzysztof Wodiczko, which took place at the opening of AND festival in 2009, and *The Humble Market* exhibition, shown at FACT in 2011. The projects are two very different examples of work that AND has 'brought' to

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140 FACT, 2014. 'Kurt Hentschlaeger – ZEE' Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/projects/abandon-normal-devices-2011/kurt-hentschlaeger-zee.aspx>. Accessed: February 21, 2014.

141 Wafer, K., Hadley, D. 2012. 'FACT. Audience Research Report. July 2012'. Wafer Headley. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 32.

142 See Bakshi, H., Throsby, D. 2010. 'The Culture of Innovation. An Economic Analysis of Innovation in Arts and Cultural Organisations'. NESTA Research Report. [PDF]. Online. Available at: [http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/culture\\_of\\_innovation.pdf](http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/culture_of_innovation.pdf). Accessed: July 13 2013. p. 17.

143 AND, 2014. 'Primitive'. Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/primitive-apichatpong-weerasethakul-2009/>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

144 AND, 2014. 'Swan-down'. Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/film-video-swan-down/>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

145 AND, 2014. 'Piercing Brightness/Dir Shezad Dawood'. Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/piercing-brightness-dir-shezad-dawood-2011/>. Accessed: January 21, 2014.

146 AND, 2014. 'The Creator/Dir Al and Al'. Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/the-creator/>. Accessed: January 21, 2014.

147 AND, 2014. 'Self Made/Dir Gillian Wearing'. Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/self-made/>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

148 AND, 2014. 'Follow/Dir Tim Brunsden'. Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/follow/>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

149 For the list of venues See AND, 2014. 'Self Made. Screenings'. Online. Available at: site at: <http://selfmade.org.uk/screenings/>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

150 AND, 2014. 'Empire Drive-In'. Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/empire-drive-in/>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.



FACT. *The Humble Market* was a radical experiment with the gallery exhibition format, and the *War Veteran Vehicle*, as a large public art project, was quite unique in the context of FACT's programming and it also presented a different approach to producing participatory projects than the traditional Collaboration's model of working.

### 3.3.2 *War Veteran Vehicle* by Krzysztof Wodiczko

**September 2009, Liverpool**

Wodiczko's project was presented at the launch of the AND festival in September 2009 in Liverpool. The *War Veteran Vehicle* was a military vehicle converted into a travelling media projection unit in which the vehicle's weapon placement, where normally a gun or a missile launcher is mounted, was re-fitted with a video projector and loudspeaker system that projected the testimonies of soldiers and their families onto the facades of buildings and monuments in the city (including The Ropewalks Square, the Metropolitan Cathedral, The World Museum) during the opening week of AND. The projected text was animated in a way that created a sense of words being fired onto the buildings. The *Vehicle* – as the artist emphasized – replaced the *projectile* of missiles with the *projection* of messages.<sup>151</sup>

The project was a powerful intervention into the public spaces of the city; the presence of a military vehicle on the city streets combined with gruelling testimonies of soldiers and their families, dealing with posttraumatic stress disorder, accompanied by loud noise of gun explosions, drew attention



Fig. 41 Krzysztof Wodiczko, *War Veteran Vehicle*, projection on Ropewalks Square, Liverpool. AND 2009. Image courtesy of AND.

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151 Wodiczko, K. 2009. In a conversation with the author. November 20.

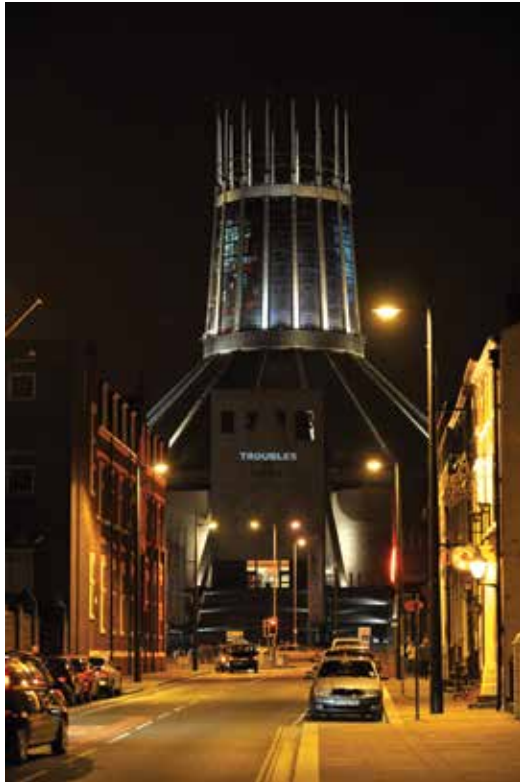


Fig. 42 and 43 Krzysztof Wodiczko, *War Veteran Vehicle*, projection on the Metropolitan Cathedral, Liverpool. AND 2009. Images courtesy of AND.

of members of the public, who often stopped and asked questions.<sup>152</sup> *War Veteran Vehicle* in Liverpool was one part of Wodiczko's larger veteran project, which has been ongoing since 2008.<sup>153</sup> Since then the artist has worked with different groups of veterans, in different countries, contributing to a more global understanding of the problem. By working with different groups of soldiers, in different countries the artist emphasises the scale of the problem, and equally points out similarities of experiences including social isolation and lack of support, which soldiers face when they return home.

Developing the project involved looking for project participants and establishing relationships with the veterans who agreed to take part. Members of FACT's Collaborations team facilitated this part of the project, as they had a significant experience of working in a social engagement context. Through organisation called Combat Stress, the team established relations with a group of veterans based in the North West.<sup>154</sup> The process of working with participants involved a series of meetings between the veterans and the project team, which led to interviews with those participants who agreed to take

152 As I was involved in the development and production of the project (working as an external curator) the description of the project is based on my observations and experience of working on the project.

153 Wodiczko has realised numerous projects with veterans: *War Veteran Vehicle* in Denver (2008), Liverpool (2009), Warsaw (2010); *Veteran Flame*, first shown in 2009 in Gorvenors Island, and 2010 in Wroclaw; exhibition *Out of Here: The Veterans Project*, ICA Boston, 2010; *Abraham Lincoln: War Veteran Projection*, 2012 on Union Square, where voices of veterans animated Abraham Lincoln statue in New York.

154 Combat Stress is a charity dedicated to helping UK veterans who suffer from mental health issues. See Combat Stress, 2012. 'The Veterans Mental Health Charity.' Online. Available at: <http://www.combatstress.org.uk/>. Accessed: June 12, 2012.

part.<sup>155</sup> A few hours of interviews were edited by the artist into 16 minutes of audio, which formed the basis of the projection. The veterans also took part in the public interventions, talking directly to the members of the public about the project and their experiences, as the projections took place.<sup>156</sup> The project received a lot of attention from the press as well as the public,<sup>157</sup> and it is often quoted as one of the most memorable and important of both AND and FACT's projects.<sup>158</sup> The project was also significant for the veterans involved, who testified to the transformative and therapeutic effect that the participation in the project had on their lives.<sup>159</sup> However, there was also a sense of frustration with aestheticising painful experiences,<sup>160</sup> and the project caused unease among FACT Collaboration's team members, who are used to working with project participants over longer periods of time. Some members of the team have voiced concerns that the project was exploitative towards the veterans and that it spectacularised the veterans traumatic experiences.<sup>161</sup> Efforts have been made by the Collaborations team to involve the veterans in other activities at FACT, such as creative skills training sessions, hoping that it would lead to a more sustained relationship and counter the short period of collaboration on the *Vehicle* project. Those efforts were not entirely successful, however the project created a legacy, as it led to the *Veterans in Practice* project, discussed in the Collaboration and Engagement part of this thesis (section 3.2.3).

### **3.3.3. *The Humble Market* by ZECORA URA, Alastair Eilbeck and James Bailey** **June – August 2012, FACT**

*The Humble Market* was an exhibition presented at FACT as part of the 2012 edition of the AND festival. It was commissioned by AND and FACT, and produced by UK-Brazilian theatre company ZECORA URA in collaboration with new media artists Alastair Eilbeck and James Bailey. The concept of *The Humble Market*, as the artists stated, was 'inspired by the rise of Brazil as an economic power' and 'it toyed with the follies of mass consumerism, and used the marketplace as a metaphor to ask what do we really trade, what should be traded, and what cannot be bought?'<sup>162</sup>

*The Humble Market* was designed as an experimental exhibition merging theatre, performance and media art, inviting the audience on a choreographed journey through FACT. The audience, divided into small groups of five at a time, was led by the Gallery Assistants through the galleries and parts

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155 Some of the interviews were conducted by the artist, during a study trip, others by Steve Griffiths from Combat Stress. In total 7 soldiers and a wife of one of them took part in the project. Few hours of interviews were edited by the artist into 16 minutes audio collection of chosen fragments from the interviews. The veterans were not involved in the editorial process however they were presented with the selection before the start of the project.

156 Krzysztof Wodiczko in an interview about the project highlights the fact that the veterans were present during the projections and engaged in conversations with the members of the public. See Parry, B. 'Interview: Krzysztof Wodiczko on War Veteran Vehicle' In B. Parry (ed.) 2011. *Cultural Hijack. Rethinking Intervention*. Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press. pp. 191-212.

157 For selection of press coverage See Interrogative, 2014. 'War Veteran Vehicle project'. Online. Available at : <http://www.interrogative.org/projects/2008/veteran-vehicle-project>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

158 Mike Stubbs, Heather Corcoran and Gabrielle Jenks, interviewed by the author, all mention *War Veteran Vehicle* as a successful AND project.

159 MacNamus, C. 2011. 'Interview with Rob, Participant in War Veteran Vehicle'. In Parry, *Cultural Hijack*. pp. 213-216.

160 MacNamus, C. 2011. 'Interview with Lisa, Participant in War Veteran Vehicle'. In Parry, *Cultural Hijack*. pp. 216-218.

161 Kholeif, Interviewed by the author.

162 AND, 2014. 'The Humble Market'. Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/humble-market/>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.



Fig. 44 Head dresses. Installation view, FACT foyer. *The Humble Market* at FACT as part of AND 2012. Image courtesy of FACT.



Fig. 45 Carnival Taxi. Installation in Gallery 1. *The Humble Market* at FACT as part of AND 2012. Image courtesy of FACT.





Fig. 46 *Intimatron*. Installation in Gallery 2. *The Humble Market* at FACT as part of AND 2012. Image courtesy of FACT.

of FACT's building, on a tour; a performance, which engaged the audience in a series of events and experiences, ranging from interactive installations to discussions on metaphysics. The journey started in the foyer, where members of the audience were asked to put on Brazilian carnival headdress and were led into Gallery 1. The group was then invited to enter a taxi, which featured surround audio and video of the Brazilian carnival. The audio coming from the taxi radio, mixed music with a speaker's voice, which, mimicking political chat shows, addressed the group sitting in the taxi with questions regarding their political beliefs on a range of subjects including immigration and abortion amongst others, urging the members of the audience to answer the questions.

The second room in Gallery 1 hosted 'Philosophy Hill'. The space was darkened and featured a large round artificial grass area with a shrine at one side. The audience members were asked to lie down on the grass and put on 3D glasses and a headset with microphone attached; this enabled communication between the members of the group. Projected onto the ceiling were sets of questions concerning religious beliefs and the human condition, which the group was encouraged to discuss. The journey continued, through the back stage area of FACT, into Gallery 2, which featured interactive phone booth installation 'Intimatron', in which the audience, once again answered a series of interrogative questions concerning their personality traits using the dial panels of the phone booths. The experience ended at the *Waiting Room* area, where the group was encouraged to discuss the experience while waiting for the results of their personality test.

In the context of FACT's exhibitions the show was a unique experiment. Constructed as a performative event, it placed the audience in the roles of active participants. However, it presented several problems and posed many challenges. The format of the exhibition as performance proved to be difficult to sustain in the traditional gallery exhibition context. The show had a limited audience due to

the nature of the performance, and received modest press coverage.<sup>163</sup> As the exhibition was scheduled to run for ten weeks, the roles of performers leading the audience through the exhibition journey were taken over by the Gallery Assistants, putting pressure on staff who were asked to assume roles beyond their normal duties.<sup>164</sup> From FACT's internal perspective, the process of staging the exhibitions also posed challenges due to the different working styles of the artists and the FACT technical team. ZECORA URA, who had worked predominantly in theatre context, were used to developing their work during the staging process, which was incompatible with the production process of FACT's technical team.<sup>165</sup> Thus the show, revealed the various limitations of the gallery format and the corresponding production models in accommodating more hybrid and performance based work.

### 3.3.4. Summary and Discussion

AND is uniquely positioned as a festival producing a variety of events and contributing to the core gallery programme of its funding institutions (FACT, Cornerhouse).<sup>166</sup> It was modeled on biennials and new media festivals to present more experimental, hybrid formats with strong emphasis on new and emerging trends and novel ideas – as is clearly manifested with the title calling for 'abandoning of normal devices'.<sup>167</sup> AND's position as a festival allows for great flexibility and independence; the notion of carnival,<sup>168</sup> associated with the festival form permits for departure from the usual constraints of institutional curating such as a clearly formulated and communicated exhibition concept or a theme, addressed to a wide audience.

AND, like other new media festivals, as discussed in the contextual review, provided a flexible presentation platform, for a broad range of artistic practices. The short duration of the festival means that it can easily accommodate work that is experimental, work-in-progress and technically not sustainable for a longer period of time. The festival also works as a catalyst bringing together artists, curators, as well as audiences, allowing for direct exchange between the artists and audience. However, AND is distinct from other film and new media festivals as it presented every aspect of contemporary art production and more dedicated to the experimental approach and 'rebellious' attitude – abandoning normal devices than to any specific medium or format despite what AND's heading (Festival of New Cinema and Digital Culture) might suggest. Although the festival functioned as a shared programming platform for three institutions, it has managed to develop its own unique voice and a strong, recognisable artistic brand, focused around being 'risk-taking', 'radical' and 'playful'.<sup>169</sup>

As a festival, AND is designed to be an inherently intense experience, in which the programming culminates in one week of events. As AND Manager Gabrielle Jenks says, curating the festival, is to consider 'how we create an experiential journey for people, [...] how do you offer these one off

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163 FACT, 2012. 'The Humble Market evaluation meeting notes'. Available on FACT hard drive. [no pagination].

164 Ibid.

165 Ibid.

166 AND was founded by three institutions : FACT, Cornerhouse and Folly, however, Folly was a commissioning agency based and it did not have its own exhibition space. Folly closed down in 2012, after the Arts Council decided to cut their funding.

167 On the characteristic of new media festivals See Cook, Graham, *Rethinking Curating*. Section 'Festivals, New, Hybrid, and (Upwardly?) Mobile'. pp. 216-224.

168 Ibid. p., 218.

169 AND, 2012. 'Interactive, Urban, Gritty and Risk Taking Work. AND Festival Review 2012'. Available on FACT hard drive. pp. 3-6.

experiences for people.<sup>170</sup> Indeed this is certainly one of the defining characteristics of AND's artistic focus. AND brought many *experiential* works to FACT and it could be argued that the popularity of works such as Kazimierz's *Atalonia* and Hentschlagers *ZEE* have influenced FACT's artistic direction with the growing tendency to present and produce experiential work.<sup>171</sup> The works discussed in this chapter – *War Veterans Vehicle* and *The Humble Market* – were chosen as examples of new *experiential experiences* which AND has brought to FACT.

Although not novel in itself – as Wodiczko's practice is long internationally established – *War Veterans Vehicle* as a large public art intervention was a new type of work in the context of FACT's artistic remit. Wodiczko's work also presented a different angle on community engagement than the traditional approach of FACT's Collaborations team. Contrary to many socially engaged projects at FACT, it was highly visible and spectacular as an attempt to make the voices of those excluded from the public debate audible in the public realm. The objective was not to work with a community to resolve the issue, but to expose, in a public testimony to the truth of traumatic experiences.<sup>172</sup> Bearing witness to the testimonies of soldiers, projected onto the city walls and accompanied by loud sounds of explosions was a powerful and disruptive *experience*. Considering the on going discussions and controversies around UK's military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, the project had a clear political agenda, which is aligned with AND's anti-authoritarian spirit.

*The Humble Market* was a bold experiment with the gallery exhibition format, and as such it demonstrates both the advantages and problems of the curatorial risk taking and challenges faced by galleries when attempting to present artwork not traditionally intended for gallery format. *The Humble Market* was an attempt to create a unique *experience*, similar to the popular immersive spectacles by theatre company Punchrunk,<sup>173</sup> or other theatre productions by ZECORA URA, such as the acclaimed *Hotel Medea*, an intense overnight theatre experience, in which the audience members become active participants in the play.<sup>174</sup> Staging a performative exhibition, such as *The Humble Market* in the context of gallery exhibition turned out to be less successful however, revealing limitations of the gallery format in accommodating more experimental, performative works.

The clash of different formats and ways of working that *Humble Market* brought about, was a result of AND's inherently experimental attitude, but also the nature of AND as a festival situated between different institutions, and the curatorial model, in which a number of partners are involved in the programming of the festival.<sup>175</sup> Even though there is no strictly curatorial or artistic director role

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170 Jenks, G. 2013. Interviewed by the author. April 19.

171 Kholeif, Interviewed by the author.

172 Wodiczko often referred in his writing to the ancient concept of 'parrhesia' (fearless truth telling), which is a precondition of democratic practice. See Wodiczko, K. 2007. 'The City, Democracy and Artistic Practice'. SIGNUM Foundation lecture. Online. Available at: <http://www.crisma.nazwa.pl/signum/docs/The%20City,%20democracy,%20and%20artistic%20practice.doc>. Accessed: September 20, 2012.

173 Punchdrunk is a theatre company based in London, regarded as pioneer of the 'immersive theatre'. It achieved a great success; one of its most famous production *Sleep no More* (2011-2012) told the story of Macbeth through series of events and performances taking place throughout five floors of a warehouse in Manhattan turned into theatre, which the audience members were free to explore at their own pace in a unique theatre journey. See project web site: <http://www.mckittrickhotel.com/#McKittrick>. Accessed July 20 2013.

174 See for example Field, A. 2009. 'Up All Night: the Intimacy of Hotel Medea.' *The Guardian*. February 6. Online. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2009/feb/06/zecora-ura-hotel-medea-arcola>. Accessed: January 21, 2014.

175 Jenks, Interviewed by the author.

within AND currently, the festival producers combine different roles including strategic direction, programming and all aspects of project management and delivery. The festival is curated by a curatorial group, which includes AND staff, CEOs and senior programming staff from the each host partner organisation.<sup>176</sup> In addition to the main curatorial group, AND, similarly to many festivals and biennials, often works with external curators and various partners in the UK, co-commissioning new work and co-curating parts of the festival.<sup>177</sup>

While this way of working allows AND to produce a great variety of works, it can also lead to challenging juxtapositions of interests as was the case with *Humble Market*. Gabrielle Jenks, AND Manager recalls in an interview that one of the reasons for the Humble Market being less successful was the number of partners who were involved in the project with different sets of expectations. Apart from AND and FACT the *Humble Market* was also supported by Derry City of Culture and WE PLAY Expo (co-operation between the Cultural Olympiad and Preston City Council), who were interested in developing a performance,<sup>178</sup> while FACT was keen for the project to be an exhibition. As such, The *Humble Market*, which needed to negotiate the various demands and expectations, was a significant risk both for AND producers and FACT.

Indeed, AND have taken many risks, not only in terms of programming; presenting work that was experimental, provocative or challenging for the audience, but they have also taken production risks, commissioning projects, which presented significant feasibility or safety challenges, for example the already mentioned playground ride from Chernobyl.<sup>179</sup> AND Producers emphasise that when working with artists they always try to push the boundaries of their work and take the artists out of their comfort zone and challenge them to try new approaches and ways of working.<sup>180</sup> The *Humble Market* project is an example of a challenge that AND presented to the artists; artists from a theatre and performance background were invited to produce a piece for a gallery exhibition, which they had never done before.

Despite some of the issues detailed above the AND curatorial and production model has proved, overall, to be successful way of working. Through multiple partnerships, AND was able to deliver a great variety of projects and support many emerging work while developing new audiences for digital art.<sup>181</sup> As such, the AND's way of working became a template for the Producer Model, which is the curatorial and production model FACT is currently moving towards. The characteristics of AND that are encapsulated within the Producer Model are 'hybrid led ideas programming', a 'cost-centred, efficient way of delivering projects and programme' and 'lighter project teams' which focus around a lead producer, and include FACT staff, freelancers and specialists.<sup>182</sup> However, the AND format also

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176 Ibid.

177 According to statistics quoted in AND review, the festival has worked with 60 organisations – 62% regional, 33% national, and 5% international – 72% within sector, 27 cross sector. Funding (20%), co-producing (29%), presenting (16%), commissioning (20%), local business (11%), other (5%). See AND, 'Interactive, Urban, Gritty and Risk Taking Work.' p. 28

178 The performance was to be presented (and indeed that was the case) during celebrations marking the end of the Cultural Olympiad in Preston, in September 2012, which co-incided with Preston celebrating its Guild (a civic celebration held every 20 years in Preston since 1542).

179 Jenks, Interviewed by the author.

180 McCollough, R. 2013. Interviewed by the author. March 5.

181 See AND, 'Interactive, Urban, Gritty and Risk Taking Work.' pp. 12-19.

182 Poulter, S and Associates, 2011. 'FACT: Digital Innovation; Draft.' Consultancy Report. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 20.



implies a high concentration of work and effort; it is very delivery-focused, and given the small number of staff working on it, it does not allow for more contextual work and critical evaluation and reflection.<sup>183</sup>

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183 Jenks, Interviewed by the author.



## **Part III.**

# **Case Study**



## **4. *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition**

Following on from the discussion of programming areas, curatorial approaches and way of working within the Exhibitions, Collaboration and Engagement and AND festival, this part of the thesis focuses in detail on curatorial and production processes behind the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition, which was presented at FACT between June 13th and September 22nd, 2013, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of FACT's building.

As noted in the introduction to the thesis, between November 2010 and June 2013, I worked on *Turning FACT Inside Out* as a co-curator alongside Mike Stubbs, FACT's CEO. The process of co-curating the exhibition was a key aspect of the practical involvement in the institution that the Collaborative Doctoral Award scheme, under which this project was funded, encourages and enables. The practical involvement was a crucial part of the institutional study allowing for an in-depth insight into FACT's curatorial and institutional practice, and has shaped this research project, situating it within a practice-led paradigm. Co-curating *Turning FACT Inside Out* involved working, as part of FACT's exhibition team, on all aspects of the exhibition development and delivery including researching and developing of the exhibition concept, proposing artists and artworks, working with artists on developing new commissions, budgeting, fundraising, writing curatorial texts and discussing the practical aspects of the project delivery, as well as performing a range of coordination tasks involved in exhibition logistics, such as sourcing exhibition materials.

This experience facilitated an in-depth understanding of the processes of curating and producing exhibition at FACT. The case study provides a behind the scenes account of the development and production of the exhibition highlighting different considerations, complexities and contingencies of the exhibition making process as well as the wider institutional mechanisms that are at play in producing an exhibition and defining its meaning. The case study gives insight into processes which are invisible from the reception point of view such as how the concept of the exhibition evolved, what influenced those changes, what did not survive to the finished exhibition and why. It also considers the reception of the exhibition and how the intentions and the meaning projected by the curators was decoded and interpreted by the audience.

The chapter charts a journey behind *Turning FACT Inside Out*: from the inception of the exhibition and its original concept, through a radical re-thinking and shift in the shape of the exhibition, through the processes of framing and negotiating the meaning of the show and communicating it to the public, to the production and the reception of the exhibition, finishing with a reflection and discussion on lessons learned from the process.

### **4.1. The development of the exhibition**

The discussion around the exhibition started in December 2010, shortly after I had been appointed collaborative doctoral candidate at CAVA and FACT. CEO Mike Stubbs' original idea was to develop a show of interactive architecture, which was to take place in the summer 2012. 'Interactive architecture' was loosely defined at the time, but the general concept was to examine the potential of new technologies, increasingly embedded in architecture, to redefine relationship between users and built environment, while responding to changing social and environmental demands, and contrib-

uting to the process of regeneration.<sup>1</sup> The exhibition was thus meant to contribute to the process of rethinking of FACT's building, (as part of the Capital Plan, prepared and discussed at the time, which proposed to extend FACT centre)<sup>2</sup> looking at how new technologies including interactive and responsive systems could help to re-imagine existing spaces and design new spaces for FACT, which would be more flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of both FACT and its audiences.

The work on the exhibitions started with a period of research and meetings with artists and designers in order to discuss their potential involvement in the exhibition. Among architects that we approached was Philip Beesley, whose large-scale installation *Hylozoic Ground* in Canadian Pavilion of Architecture Biennale in Venice in 2010 caught our attention.<sup>3</sup> The work was an immersive, interactive architectural environment, constructed from a light-weight mesh in which were embedded arrays of sensors, microprocessors and kinetic devices, creating a large 'artificial forest'<sup>4</sup> that responded to the presence of the viewer 'like a giant lung that breathes in and out around its occupants'.<sup>5</sup> Beesley's work, which raised questions about the potential for architectural systems to become quasi-living, responsive environments, and combining interests in responsive architecture, geotextiles, robotics, and biotechnology seemed an interesting starting point for the discussion about the future of architecture. After initial conversations and meetings, Philip Beesley proposed three options for a large-scale installation at FACT, based on the research and concept explored in the *Hylozoic Ground* – scaled according to different budget options. The proposed project with tentative title *Near Living Architecture*, in its largest option would take over the entire space of Gallery 1 transforming it into responsive, immersive installation – akin to the project shown in Venice. However, It was clear from the beginning that Beesley's installation would require substantial additional funding, and several fundraising initiatives were undertaken.<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 47 Philip Beesley, *Hylozoic Ground* installation, Venice Biennale, 2010. Image courtesy of Philip Beesley

- 1 Krzemien-Barkley, A. 2010. 'Interactive Architecture'. Draft curatorial text. Available on FACT hard drive.
- 2 The Capital Plan proposed to extend FACT building by incorporating spaces adjacent to the back of the building, as well as designing new architectural feature on Ropewalks square, leading to the entrance. (based on a conversation with Mike Stubbs on December 10, 2010).
- 3 Beesley, P. 2012. 'Hylozoic Ground'. Online. Available at: <http://www.hylozoicground.com/Venice/>. Accessed: July 20, 2013.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 The smallest option would cost around £20,000, larger £60, 000 and the largest £150, 000 (Beesley, P. 2012. 'Hylozoic Series, FACT Proposal document'. Available on FACT drive). Several funding initiative were undertaken, including a bid for 30,000 USD to the Graham Foundation, which was not successful.

Around the same time, a research project, with potential links to the still at the time broadly defined framework of the exhibition, was gathering pace at FACT. Roger McKinley, Research and Development Manager at FACT, was working on an ARTSENSE project; an ambitious collaboration, between three cultural institutions and seven technological partners from across Europe which aimed to develop hardware and software for an adaptive Augmented Reality tool to be used in a cultural heritage context.<sup>7</sup> In simple terms, the objective of the project was to develop a type of 'audio-visual guide' which, using Augmented Reality technology,<sup>8</sup> could 'annotate' artworks on display with additional information and respond to the users by adapting the content provided. The tool would provide users with an extra layer of information that was adapted depending on users' reactions, measured by biosensors.<sup>9</sup> FACT was one of three cultural partners invited to input and advise on the process of developing the technology and to produce content for the device, tailored to the needs of their visitors. FACT was a unique collaborator in that, unlike other cultural partners participating in the project, it does not have a collection around which to produce content. Therefore, FACT took a different approach and it proposed to commission artists to experiment with and produce work using the newly developed hardware and Augmented Reality technology as an artistic tool, examining the possibilities that it offered for making and participating in art.

The project seemed to offer a great potential in the context of an interactive architecture exhibition, as Augmented Reality and wearable technologies have increasingly been discussed in connection to spatially embedded interfaces.<sup>10</sup> There was also another, highly practical, reason for including the ARTSENSE project in the exhibition: the substantial amount of funding that was attached to the project.<sup>11</sup> We agreed that we would work together on the commissioning process and that the resulting work would be presented as part of the exhibition. Together with Roger McKinley, we conducted research into the artistic applications of Augmented Reality, and prepared a list of artists who we thought could work in the context of both the exhibition and the ARTSENSE agenda. A call for proposals was prepared by Roger McKinley and sent to selected artists who were already working with Augmented Reality.<sup>12</sup>

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- 7 ARTSENSE, 2014. 'Project Overview'. Online. Available at: <http://www.artsense.eu/project-overview/>. Accessed: January 20, 2014. Cultural institutions involved in the projects were: FACT, Museum of Decorative Arts in Valencia and Conservatoire National des Arts et Metiers in Paris. Technical partners: Forschungszentrum Informatik an der Universität Karlsruhe (FZI), Fraunhofer, Karlsruhe, Liverpool John Moores University, Universidad Politecnica, Valencia, Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche en Informatique et Communication, Paris, CIM Group, Nis (Serbia), Corvinno Technology Transfer Centre, Budapest. See ARTSENSE, 2014. 'Consortium'. Online. Available at: <http://www.artsense.eu/consortium-overview/>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.
  - 8 Augmented Reality (AR) refers to the technology that offers a real-time view of one's immediate surroundings altered or enhanced by computer generated information. When users examine their environment through AR devices, they see information superimposed on the objects around them'. See Financial Times Lexicon. 2014. 'Definition of Augmented Reality'. Online. Available at: <http://lexicon.ft.com/?term=augmented-reality>. Accessed: July 20, 2013.
  - 9 ARTSENSE, 2012. 'Technology'. Online. Available at: <http://www.artsense.eu/technology/>. Accessed, July 20, 2013. See also McKinley, R., Dramala, A. 2013. 'ARTSENSE and Manifest AR: Revisiting Museums in the Public Realm through Emerging Art Practices'. In: N. Proctor, R. Cherry (eds). 2013. *Museums and the Web*. Online. Available at: <http://mw2013.museumsandtheweb.com/paper/artsense-and-manifest-ar-revisiting-museums-in-the-public-realm-through-emerging-art-practices/>. Accessed: May 15, 2013.
  - 10 See Hansen, M. B. N. 2002. 'Wearable Space'. *Configurations*. 10: 2. pp. 321-370.
  - 11 There was approximately £30,000 allocated to the project, which almost doubled the exhibition budget (£35,000).
  - 12 The list of artists included prominent names such as Blast Theory collective and Julian Oliver.

After receiving a preliminary outline of proposals, we then pre-selected four proposals which were presented to the ARTSENSE consortium to vote and choose the proposal they thought worked best in terms of meeting ARTSENSE objectives. As a result, the artists collective Manifest AR, who proposed to develop a series of projects, using Augmented Reality both as an artistic medium in itself and as a tool to augment the viewers' experience, were chosen for the commission. As the exhibition was scheduled to take place mid-way through the ARTSENSE project<sup>13</sup> – which meant that the commission would still be a work in progress – it was decided that the Manifest AR projects would be presented in a lab-type installation reflecting the highly experimental and process-based nature of the work.

The work by Philip Beesley and the Manifest AR Augmented Reality lab were the core of the exhibition, which – with a working title *Nervous systems* – focused on how technology (embedded computation, virtual reality, mobile platforms), saturating physical spaces with dynamic data and creating intelligent hybrid environments, have changed the way we interact with physical world.<sup>14</sup>

With the core of the exhibition broadly outlined, we were developing other aspects of the show, looking especially for a participatory project which could engage communities and the broader public with the exhibition. We continued to meet and discuss proposals with artists including Natalie Jeremijenko, Kate Rich, Nina Edge and Alistair Eilbeck. As a result we invited Liverpool based artist Nina Edge – renowned for her projects with local communities and social and political activism – to produce a new work for the FACT Connects Space. We continued with the exhibition preparations and artists visits. During the Manifest AR study visit in June 2012, a new title for the exhibition emerged as Mike Stubbs, during one of our discussions regarding the commissions, stated that he wanted the work to 'turn FACT inside out'. Despite being a rather bold statement, *Turning FACT Inside Out* caught on as it seemed rather fitting for the 10th anniversary of the building.

This was the shape of the project, until November 2012, when we received the news that ARTSENSE project was suspended.<sup>15</sup> Reasons for the suspension aside, the fact that nearly 50% of the anticipated exhibition budget was unavailable meant that the exhibition, as it was planned at the time, was unfeasible. We decided to rethink the main aspect of the exhibition, that is the installations in the Gallery 1 and Gallery 2. What followed was an intense period of brainstorming ideas and discussions about the shape of the exhibition and potential artists. We decided that we would still present Manifest AR work, which had been being developed for a long period, and Nina Edge's project and rethink all the other aspects of the show.

We wrote another *Turning FACT Inside Out* curatorial brief, summarising our discussions and the current thinking around the exhibition. Rethinking the concept of the exhibition, we realised that the ideas around interactive architecture had lost their resonance. Various factors contributed to this including the fact that Capital Plan bid was unsuccessful, as were our fundraising efforts, while the costs of putting on the proposed Philip Beesley installation seemed staggering compared to the average exhibition budgets.<sup>16</sup> The climate had also changed; while the exhibition started with an en-

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13 ARTSENSE research and development was to take place over three years starting from February 2011.

14 Krzemien Barkley, A. 2011. 'Nervous Systems'. Draft curatorial text. Available on FACT hard drive. See Appendix 1.1.

15 The reasons for suspension were broadly to do with technical feasibility of the project. However, the ARTSENSE consortium considered the decision unjustified, and appealed against it.

16 The large installation option, which we were aiming for was priced at approx. 150,000 (more than FACT's exhibition budget for the entire year).



thusiasm for the planned expansion of the building and the projected growth of the institution, late 2012 had a very different feel to it. The severe funding cuts to arts organisations in 2011 left many of them struggling, while others were forced to close down altogether. Although FACT was one of the institutions less effected by the cuts,<sup>17</sup> the spirit in the UK cultural sector was dampened. Continuous coverage of economic crises in the Eurozone and the UK recession was also eroding any optimism for the expansion of the cultural sector in near future. Staging a very expensive hi-tech interactive architecture installation, beside the fact that it was simply unaffordable, seemed also less relevant in the current context.

The emphasis of the revised exhibition proposal shifted from an examination of the relationship between technology and physical space towards being an institutional self-reflection. The reviewed exhibition brief (Appendix 1.2.) was framed as an invitation for artists to respond to FACT, as a physical and social space while engaging with a series of questions reflecting on its role and its future as an art institution. The self-reflection was an important aspect in framing of the exhibition, but we were also interested in encouraging playful and to some extent subversive approaches by the artist:

'With this exhibition we are inviting artists and creative producers to turn FACT INSIDE OUT; to play, examine, respond or subvert the physical envelope of the building and the institutional framework. The artists will work with the material of FACT, understood as physical and social space as well as international platform: a hub where art, people and technology meet'.<sup>18</sup>

The playful and engaged strategy was something that we were looking for. This reflected the already existing choice of artists; Manifest AR, known for their virtual interventions, and uninvited exhibitions,<sup>19</sup> and Nina Edge, who had been engaged in and leading on a number of local citizen initiatives.<sup>20</sup> After a series of discussions with the entire exhibition team, during which a number of artists and projects were put forward, we decided to approach artistic duo HeHe, Katarzyna Krakowiak and Steve Lambert and invite them to submit proposals. The artists were provided with a curatorial brief as well as plans and images of both gallery spaces and were invited to propose projects for either gallery. Given the short timeframe for developing new work, many artists on our short list were those with whom FACT had previously worked, as developing relationship with an artist can be time consuming. HeHe collaborated with the AND festival (*M Blem* 2012),<sup>21</sup> and there have been ongoing discussions regarding a potential retrospective at FACT, in collaboration with the Art Catalyst. Steve Lambert also previously worked at FACT during the *Climate for Change* exhibition.

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17 FACT had a funding cuts of around 10%, which was still rather modest comparing to some other arts organisations.

18 FACT, 2013. 'Turning FACT Inside Out Curatorial Brief'. Available on FACT hard drive. See Appendix 1.2.

19 Manifest AR staged a series of uninvited virtual exhibitions, whereby using Augmented Reality they placed their virtual artworks in museums and galleries, including New York MoMa (Manifest AR, 2013. 'We AR in MOMA'. Online. Available at: <http://www.sndrv.nl/moma/>. Accessed: July 20, 2013) and Venice Biennial 2011 (Manifest AR, 2013. 'Manifest AR Venice Biennial Intervention'. Online. Available at: <http://manifestarblog.wordpress.com/venice2011/>. Accessed: July 20, 2013).

20 Most recently, Nina Edge has been leading on a citizen campaign opposing plans for demolition of over 200 houses in Liverpool Welsh Street area. For more information See Welsh Street Homes, 2011. 'Demolishing the Housing Myth'. Online. Available at: <http://www.welshstreets.co.uk/>. Accessed: July 21, 2013.

21 *M-Blem* by HeHe was a small automated vehicle, which travelled on old rail tracks around Science Museum in Manchester during AND festival in 2012 (See AND, 2013. 'M-Blem, the Train Project'. Online. Available at: <http://www.andfestival.org.uk/events/m-blem-the-train-project/>. Accessed: July 21, 2013).

The main criteria for choosing those artists were the quality of their previous work, our assessment of the artists' ability to work in site-specific context and to produce a new commission, as well as different artistic approaches, which we thought the artists could bring, contributing to a more varied exhibition. HeHe's previous work included projects that critically engaged with a range of current social and political issues often in a playful and humorous way.<sup>22</sup> Their work has also combined interest in design and technology, growing out of the DIY culture of new media, which FACT was been interested in representing. Steve Lambert is an artist, designer, activist and 'prankster' associated with famous political prankster duo the Yes Men. Activism, subversive strategies and humour were artistic attitudes that fitted with the purpose of the exhibition, which was to play with and radically rethink FACT. Less obvious was the choice of Katarzyna Krakowiak, a Polish artist from outside the new media art scene. Former student and assistant of Miroslaw Balka – a renowned Polish conceptual artist – Krakowiak is firmly grounded in the conceptual end of contemporary art. The choice of Krakowiak was dictated by her interest in an investigation of architecture, which resulted in many interesting works including an acclaimed installation in the Polish Pavilion at the Architecture Biennale in Venice (2012).<sup>23</sup>

The artists came back with preliminary proposals: Steve Lambert proposed an existing work, the sign *Capitalism Works for Me, True/False*. HeHe proposed *FACTORY*, which would see one of the galleries turned into fully operating DIY car manufacturing workshop. Katarzyna Krakowiak outlined an idea for an architectural intervention in FACT's building, which required a study visit in order to prepare a proposal. After discussions with the artists led by the production team regarding practicalities of the projects proposed, it was decided that HeHe's *FACTORY* was not feasible within the allocated project budget, and the artists were asked to propose another project. Krakowiak's study visit resulted in an interesting proposal to open FACT's Gallery 1 onto the street (through opening of the workshop and loading bay space at the back of Gallery 1) and turn the space of Gallery 1 into a resonating box filled with amplified sounds of FACT's building mixed with sounds coming from outside. Responding directly to the theme of '*Turning FACT Inside Out*', the project proposed to 'punch through the walls of FACT';<sup>24</sup> creating additional entrance/exit, linking directly the inside of the gallery with Bold Street, breaking away from the 'black box' paradigm, which FACT was so strongly associated with. The movement of opening the gallery and bringing outside in was to be strengthened by a strong airflow (created by an industrial fan) and sounds that would travel into the gallery through complex acoustic system embedded into the walls and underneath the floor.

In the meantime, HeHe developed another proposal for a project entitled *Fracking Futures*, which envisaged building a large-scale installation of a fracking platform, while drawing attention to the

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22 For example their work *Nuage Vert* (2008) was an environmental artwork, in which a laser projection illuminated a cloud of vapour emissions from a power plant in Helsinki. The work was awarded a Golden Nica by Prix Ars Electronica. (See HeHe, 2013. 'Nuage Vert'. Online. Available at: <http://hehe.org.free.fr/hehe/NV08/index.html>. Accessed: July 21, 2013). The project *Is there a horizon in the deep water* (2011) recreated in miniature the 2010 Gulf of Mexico disaster. (See HeHe, 2013. 'Is there a horizon in the deep water'. Online. Available at: <http://hehe.org.free.fr/hehe/deepwaterII/index.html> web site: <http://hehe.org.free.fr/hehe/>. Accessed: July 21, 2013).

23 Biennale Art. Pl, 2012. 'Making the Walls Quake as If They Were Dilating with the Secret Knowledge of Great Powers'. Online. Available at: <http://www.labiennale.art.pl/2012/en/exhibition>. Accessed: July 22, 2013.

24 Krakowiak, K. 2013. 'Turning FACT Inside Out Revised Proposal'. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 2.

debate about the issue of fracking,<sup>25</sup> which was very timely, as fracking tests were taking place in parts of North West England at the time. On one hand, the work was touching on serious geopolitical, economic and environmental issues related to fracking, but on the other it had a playful element to it. The artists proposed that the installation would be accompanied by promotional campaign suggesting that shale gas had been discovered under FACT and that the institution would become energy exporter.<sup>26</sup> In the context of the show, which posed questions about the future of art institutions to suggest that FACT was closing its main gallery for the 10th anniversary in order to do exploratory drilling, would be an obvious ironic commentary on the situation of art institutions in the time of austerity.

As both projects, by Krakowiak and HeHe, were proposed for the Gallery 1, we were faced with the dilemma of which project to realise in that space. Both projects were equally justified in their requirement of Gallery 1, for different reasons. Those kinds of choices are naturally part of curatorial work, but in this instance, the decision was particularly difficult, as presenting either of those works in Gallery 1 would have significant impact on the shape and the narrative of the entire exhibition. Choosing Krakowiak's project for Gallery 1 would radically change the architecture of FACT, creating an additional opening onto the street through the back door of FACT. The gallery would be empty, filled only with amplified sounds carried inwards by air draft, echoed and resonated by the gallery architecture embedded with a sound system. Conceptually, the piece worked well as a response to '*Turning FACT Inside Out*', opening liminal spaces at FACT (such as the loading bay, the workshop and another entrance), making them function as an exhibition space. The choice of *Fracking Futures* for Gallery 1, on the other hand, would make the show more spectacular but also perhaps – which was a concern – strongly place the issue of fracking at the centre of the exhibition.

The decision was taken based on our perception of which project was more fitting with FACT's artistic brand (was more FACT). According to us, HeHe's piece had the playfulness, humour, and irony, and certain immediacy, which FACT liked to associate itself with. In addition, there were practical reasons, such as the process of fracking needed to take place on the ground floor, whereas Katarzyna would be able to engage with another part of FACT building, which meant preparing another proposal. We worked closely with Katarzyna to prepare a new proposal, after which point the exhibition began to take its final shape.

The last project to be added to final shortlist was *TransEurope Slow* by Uncoded Collective. The project was chosen from a selection of proposals submitted to the Connecting Cities, which is a network of art institutions – with FACT as a core partner – co-commissioning work for urban screens.<sup>27</sup> The reasons for including *TransEurope Slow* were that the project offered a potential for community engagement and that it fitted well with the theme of the exhibition. There was also an aspect of opportunism in including *TransEurope Slow* as it came with its own funding, and therefore helped to subsidise a community project, which we did not have funds for in the already overstretched exhibition budget.

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25 Fracking – short from 'hydraulic fracturing' – is a technology of extracting shale gas and oil from shale rock. On summary of controversies See Shukham, D. 2013. 'What is Fracking and Why Is it Controversial?' *BBC News UK*. June 27. Online. Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-14432401>. Accessed: July 23, 2013.

26 HeHe, 2013. 'Turning FACT Inside Out Proposal. January 30th'. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 1.

27 Connecting Cities, 2013. 'About Connecting Cities'. Online. Available at: <http://www.connectingcities.net/about-connecting-cities>. Accessed: July 23, 2013.

## 4.2. The exhibition

The exhibition, in its final shape, presented 12 works ranging from large-scale installations, architectural interventions, and interactive pieces to Augmented Reality projects. All the works presented in the exhibition, with the exception of Steve Lambert's *Capitalism Works for Me! True/False*, were newly commissioned for *Turning FACT Inside Out*.

### 4.2.1. Nina Edge, *Ten Intentions*

FACT Connects Space

*Ten Intentions* by Nina Edge was a communication experiment and a platform for discussion. Using Siri, the iPhone voice recognition system, the audience was able to engage with a series of discussions on themes proposed by the artist – ranging from the bedroom tax, climate change, and some questions inspired by the exhibition (such as fracking). The artist proposed different topics for each week of the exhibition including Change, Loss, Justice, Fame, Fortune, Power and Shelter. Visitors were able to express their opinions, by speaking to Siri, and those conversations were processed by voice recognition software and archived on the project web site, accessible through a touchscreen. One could also contribute to the discussion through the project web site.

The work was housed in a large tent (2 meters high, 5 meters wide, 2.5 meters deep), in FACT Connects Space, opposite the main entrance. As the artist emphasised, the tent was a space for discus-



Fig. 48 Nina Edge, *Ten Intentions*, FACT Connects Space. Image courtesy of FACT.

sion, a place where people come together to debate and chat, but it was also a reminder of the real consequences of the issues that are being discussed, such as the bedroom tax, which are forcing people out of their homes.<sup>28</sup>

In context of the exhibition, this work – responding to the questions about the role of FACT as an art institution – postulated the importance of cultural institutions as predominantly public spaces – alternative arenas for debate. On the formal level, the piece also played with the notions of *inside* and *outside* – existing across and beyond the physical boundaries of the building, as the work in the gallery was an interface, one node of access to the platform, accessible worldwide.

The key ambition for this piece was to create a platform for a meaningful discussion which visitors to the gallery and online users would utilise to express their opinions. The tent housing the work at FACT was also envisaged as a potential resource space for community groups to hold meetings in while taking advantage of the technology on hand to record their discussions. However, this ambition presented also a major challenge, since moderating the process of engagement and exchange required significant amount of time, and put pressure on the Gallery Assistants, who were tasked not only with explaining the practicalities of the work but also with trying to engage the audience with the series of questions and issues that the artist was posing through her work.

Table 1 Nina Edge, *Ten intentions* – project information summary.

| Artist/<br>country | Title/Date/<br>Previous<br>work or<br>a new com-<br>mission    | Type of<br>work | Elements of<br>the work/<br>installation  | Location                            | Key<br>ambition  | Key<br>challenge  | Budget |
|--------------------|--|-----------------|---|-------------------------------------|--|---|--------|
| Nina Edge<br>(UK)  | <i>Ten Inten-<br/>tions</i> ,<br>2013<br><br>New<br>commission | Installation    | Tent, iPad<br>with Siri<br>application,<br>touchscreen,<br><i>Ten Inten-<br/>tions</i> web<br>site. | FACT Con-<br>nects Space/<br>Online | Create a<br>platform for<br>discussion;<br>open FACT<br>as a space<br>for debate | Engaging<br>the audience<br>with the<br>work and<br>a series of<br>issues raised<br>by the artist,<br>moderating<br>the work as<br>a platform<br>for debate | £5000  |

#### 4.2.2. Steve Lambert, *Capitalism Works for Me! True/False*

FACT foyer

The piece was a massive carnivalesque sign (6 meters wide and nearly 3 meters high), posing the question ‘In your life, is capitalism working?’ Beneath it was a polling station where the audience could vote True or False in response to the question. The vote count was displayed on the front panel of the sign. The piece was accompanied by a documentary film, presented on a monitor located in the close proximity to the sign, which the artist made recording people’s reactions and responses as he toured his sign across the US in the run up to the 2012 US presidential elections and beyond.<sup>29</sup>

28 Edge, N. 2013. ‘Ten Intentions’ (email communication, May 23, 2013).

29 For tour details and videos see the project web page: Lambert, S. 2011. ‘Capitalism Works for Me True/False’. Online. Available at <<http://visitsteve.com/made/capitalism-works-for-me-truefalse/>>. Accessed: July 20, 2013.



Fig 49 Steve Lambert, *Capitalism Works For Me True/False*, FACT cafe area. Image courtesy of FACT.

Lambert's piece *Capitalism Works For Me! True/False* was a spectacle and a provocation which raised surprising answers as evidenced in the documentary. Despite posing a serious question and expecting serious answers, Lambert's one-man polling station, with its air of funfair, was also an ironic commentary on the nature of political debate whose impotent language often retreats into slogans and simplistic statements, offering little hope for change.

Steve Lambert responded to the curatorial brief and our question about the future of art institutions by saying: 'what public institutions should be doing – create a space where essential discussion can happen that wouldn't happen elsewhere – not in workplaces, government offices, or over dinner. And FACT makes that space as accessible and welcoming as possible.'<sup>30</sup> Provoking and creating a space for discussion was the key ambition for Steve Lambert's piece in the context of the exhibition. Originally, the piece was planned for the Ropewalks Square in front of FACT's main entrance, where – as we envisaged – the sign, being so highly visible, would draw attention of the passersby on the busy Square and adjacent Bold Street, engaging much broader audience than FACT visitors. However, due to technical difficulties with maintaining the work outside, the sign was installed at the back entrance to FACT building, in the café area, which limited its potential for wider impact with non-gallery audience.

30 Lambert, S. 2013. 'Turning FACT Inside Out. Proposal'. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 1.

Table 2 Steve Lambert, *Capitalism Works For Me! True/False* – project information summary.

| Artist/<br>country       | Title/Date/<br>Previous<br>work or<br>a new com-<br>mission                             | Type of<br>work | Elements of<br>the work/<br>installation      | Location   | Key<br>ambition   | Key<br>challenge   | Budget |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------|---|--|---|--|--------|
| Steve<br>Lambert<br>(US) | <i>Capitalism<br/>Works For<br/>Me! True/<br/>False</i><br>2011<br><br>Previous<br>work | Installation    | Sign, voting<br>station,<br>video<br>footage. | Above back<br>entrance to<br>FACT - FACT<br>cafe area. | To engage<br>wider audi-<br>ence with<br>the piece,<br>provoke<br>and create<br>a space for<br>discussion | Limited im-<br>pact of the<br>work due to<br>its location<br>inside FACT,<br>determined<br>by technical<br>problems<br>with main-<br>taining the<br>work outside | £1505  |

#### 4.2.3. HeHe, *Fracking Futures*

##### Gallery 1

HeHe's installation transformed Gallery 1 into an industrial landscape and experimental drilling site for hydraulic fracking. The work consisted of a drilling rig structure (approx. 4 meters high) with a mechanical arm and a gas flare, a water pit embedded in the gallery floor, and a system of speakers and amplifiers, which reproduced and distributed throughout the gallery space sounds of drilling while creating vibrations that simulated tectonic tremors. A few tonnes of tarmac covering the gallery floor completed the effect of an industrial site. The installation worked at choreographed intervals during which the mechanical arm was moving, while the sounds of drilling



Fig. 50 HeHe, *Fracking Futures*, Gallery 1. Image courtesy of FACT.

and vibrations were increasing, cumulating in loud noise and bursts of fire from the gas flare. The audience were allowed into the gallery wearing hard hats and only allowed to observe the installation from some distance.

The work, as the artists emphasised, was not an attempt to take a pro or con stand regarding the issue of fracking; 'the installation refrains from making a clear-cut judgement in favour of offering an experiential platform for discussion'.<sup>31</sup> The issue of fracking is part of a larger debate where headlines of the current global political economy converge, including those of fuel dependency in relation to global power structures, economic crises and threats of environmental catastrophes. Replying to our invitation, HeHe wrote:

'This place of uncertainty makes environmental controversies such an interesting subject for us. Since opinions are so polarised, we think that cultural institution can play a role in hosting a debate from an artistic perspective. This is where we would refer to the idea of *Turning FACT Inside Out* – to bring a geopolitical, economic and environmental debate like fracking inside a cultural institution.'<sup>32</sup>

*Fracking Futures* – as the central piece of the exhibition, located in the main gallery – brought together key elements of *Turning FACT Inside Out* narrative. The work, quite literally, turned the gallery space inside out, transforming it into industrial landscape. This playful yet critical gesture – staging fracking at FACT – pointed to the importance of cultural venues as potential alternative arenas for public discussion around current socio-political issues while hinting, with a healthy dose of irony, at alternative funding streams for public institutions in times of austerity.

While the key ambition for *Fracking Futures* was to engage the audience with the questions relating to the role and the future of art galleries in a playful and humorous way, producing and maintaining such a large scale and complex work presented many challenges. There were significant health and safety issues related to the use of open fire in the gallery space, as well as problems with loud audio and vibrations travelling to the cinema screens above. Getting a few tonnes of tarmac into the gallery was also a significant logistical challenge during the set up stage. Although all of the issues were addressed and resolved, and the work was successfully set up, maintaining the installation operational for the duration of the exhibition also proved difficult. Recurring problems with Arduino (the open source electronic prototypic platform), which controlled the running of the piece, caused the work to be non-operational for about two weeks in total throughout the exhibition.

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31 FACT, 2013. 'HeHe Wall panel'. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 1.

32 HeHe, 2013. 'Fracking Futures. A HeHe Proposal for FACT'. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 1.



Table 3 HeHe, *Fracking Futures* – project information summary.

| Artist/<br>country                                   | Title/Date/<br>Previous<br>work or<br>a new com-<br>mission    | Type of<br>work | Elements of<br>the work/<br>installation   | Location  | Key<br>ambition  | Key<br>challenge   | Budget |
|--|--|-----------------|--|-----------|--|--|--------|
| HeHe: Helen<br>Evans (UK),<br>Heiko Han-<br>sen (DE) | <i>Fracking<br/>Futures</i><br>2013<br><br>New com-<br>mission | Installation    | Drilling<br>rig, water<br>pit, sound<br>track, audio<br>system<br>smoke gen-<br>erator, flame<br>projector,<br>tarmac. | Gallery 1 | Staging an<br>immersive<br>installation<br>and engag-<br>ing the<br>audience, in<br>playful and<br>humorous<br>manner,<br>with the key<br>questions<br>posed by the<br>exhibition:<br>the future<br>and the role<br>of art institu-<br>tions | Technical<br>sustain-<br>ability of<br>the work<br>throughout<br>the exhibi-<br>tion period:<br>problems<br>with<br>Arduino left<br>the work<br>non-oper-<br>ational for<br>two weeks. | £10962 |

#### 4.2.4. Katarzyna Krakowiak, *Chute* Gallery 2

Similarly to the initial proposal, the project prepared by Katarzyna Krakowiak set out to reveal and map out the hidden spaces of the FACT building. It was a sound sculpture and architectural intervention which dramatically altered the architecture and soundscape of the space of Gallery 2. The piece was inspired by rubbish chutes in post-communist blocks of flats in Krakowiak's native Poland. The sound of rubbish falling down the chute was an integral part of the soundscape of communal living but it was also acoustically mapping the building, revealing spaces that were hidden from sight.

In the same way, in *Chute* the sound was used to map out the hidden spaces of FACT. In the installation, sounds were pre-recorded and sourced live from different functional spaces of FACT – loading bays and lift shafts which are normally soundproofed and hidden from view. Those functional, disregarded sounds were mixed live and 'thrown down' into the gallery through a complex audio system suspended from the ceiling. In addition, *Chute* dramatically altered the architecture of the space with an industrial metal grid that cut diagonally across the gallery space. The grid created the enclosure of the chute, its angle emphasising the existing angles and slopes of the gallery ceiling. The work also physically brought outside inside by revealing windows previously hidden in the gallery walls and allowing natural light and air to flow into the construction.

The key ambition for *Chute* in the context of the exhibition was to create a piece that examined and responded to FACT as a building both in its architectural form and its function as a gallery space. Turning the gallery into a listening device was a result of the artist's exploration of FACT; the workings of its structure, the ambience of its social life, its connection to the city, whose voices it reverberates. The installation attempted to reveal this inner life of FACT building by eavesdropping on and amplifying its soundscape. Transforming the architecture of the gallery, cutting it with a diagonal grid and opening the window, was also an attempt to alter the choreography and the viewer's experience of the gallery space, while breaking away with the 'black box' paradigm, which FACT is strongly associated with. However, despite the installation



Fig. 51 Katarzyna Krakowiak, *Chute*, Gallery 2. Image courtesy of FACT.

being a radical intervention into the space, the concept of the work – as reported by the Gallery Assistants – was not as immediate as expected, and required further explanation in order for the audience to engage with it.<sup>33</sup>

Table 4 Katarzyna Krakowiak, *Chute* – project information summary.

| Artist/<br>country   | Title/Date/<br>Previous<br>work or<br>a new com-<br>mission | Type of<br>work | Elements of<br>the work/<br>installation   | Location  | Key<br>ambition   | Key<br>challenge  | Budget |
|--|---|-----------------|--|-----------|---|---|--------|
| Katarzyna<br>Krakowiak<br>(PL)<br>in col-<br>laboration<br>with sound<br>designer Ralf<br>Meinz (DE) | <i>Chute</i><br>2013<br><br>New com-<br>mission             | Installation    | Metal grid<br>(black<br>painted<br>aluminum),<br>8-channel<br>audio: pre-<br>recorded<br>and sourced<br>live from<br>FACT build-<br>ing, audio<br>system,<br>wireless mi-<br>crophones,<br>mixing<br>console | Gallery 2 | Create an<br>installation,<br>which ex-<br>amined and<br>responded<br>to the FACT<br>building | Communi-<br>cating the<br>work and<br>the artistic<br>process<br>behind it to<br>the public | £9975  |

<sup>33</sup> See FACT, 2013. 'Turning FACT Inside Out Evaluation Meeting Notes'. Available on FACT hard drive. [no pagination].



Fig. 52 Manifest AR installation view, FACT foyer. *I Must be Seeing Things* by John Cleater (in the foreground), *Biomer Skelter*, documentation, by Tamiko Thiel and Will Pappenheimer (on the right hand side monitor). Image courtesy of Tamiko Thiel.



Fig. 53 Will Pappenheimer and Zachary Brady, *FACT Sky Museum*. Image courtesy of the artists.



Fig. 54 Tamiko Thiel and Will Pappenheimer, *Biomer Skelter*. Image courtesy of the artists.



Fig. 55 Mark Skwarek and Animesh Anand, *Diminished City*. Image courtesy of the artist.





Fig. 56 John Craig Freeman, *Things We Have Lost*, installation view, FACT foyer. Image courtesy of Tamiko Thiel.

#### 4.2.5. ManifestAR, *Invisible ARtffects*

##### FACT foyer

Six different pieces by Manifest AR were presented in the foyer on a series of monitors and iPads. All the works by Manifest AR used Augmented Reality (AR) technology and mobile digital platforms which offered the opportunity for the audience to experience and co-create reality, augmented by the digital information while claiming the virtual realms as a new territory for the expansion of the gallery.

*FACT Sky Museum* by Will Pappenheimer and Zachary Brady was an AR application (Skywrite AR), which allowed for the audience to draw and write messages on the sky above FACT in virtual air-plane trails. The drawings and messages – produced and viewable on an iPad provided in the gallery, or personal mobile devices – were archived, becoming part of the virtual collection of The *FACT Sky Museum*. The project was accompanied by documentation footage and a current catalog of sky drawings, drawn over FACT, which were presented on a monitor.

*Biomer Skelter* ('biome' + 'helter-skelter') by Will Pappenheimer and Tamiko Thiel was an Augmented Reality urban game, which used biosensing technology to generate virtual vegetation. *Biomer Skelter* captured heart rate activity of a person walking around Liverpool, converting the data into virtual plants. The faster heart rate was the more intense the virtual vegetation was being generated in the Augmented Reality. The game allowed for two teams of people – one planting native species, and the other, invasive, exotic plants – compete in creating the virtual vegetation of the city of Liverpool. The work draw inspiration from the botanic history of Liverpool, and the exotic virtual plants were

based on the World Museum Liverpool's William Roscoe botanic print collection.<sup>34</sup> Documentation of *Biomer Skelter* game taking place in Liverpool, and a map showing the virtual vegetation in the city were presented on a monitor.

*Things We Have Lost* by John Craig Freeman and Scott Kildall populated the city with virtual representations of things lost by Liverpool residents. The artists, during their study visit to Liverpool, conducted short, vox populi interviews, asking random passers by 'What have you lost'? Based on the responses, the artists created a series of virtual lost objects, which were geo-located to the place where the interviews took place, creating a network of augmented objects viewable on mobile devices. The interviews with Liverpool residents, and selected augments were presented in a video documentation.

John Cleater's *I Must be Seeing Things* was an Augmented Reality viewer which 'assisted the audience engagement with abstract imagery'.<sup>35</sup> The AR viewer was installed on an iPad, placed in front of a book of drawings, inspired by The Rorschach test and Max Ernst's illustrations. As the audience members flicked through the book of drawings, virtual abstract imagery, which 'annotated' the physical drawings, were visible on the AR viewer.

Mark Skwarek's *Diminished City* played with the possibilities of Augmented Reality technology and instead of adding a virtual layer, used AR to remove fragments of physical world. The application, installed on an iPad, placed in front of FACT's glass facade allowed the audience members to erase elements of FACT building and the immediate environment.

*Human Conference Sensors* by Sander Veenhof was a documentation of a test of a 'Human Conference Sensor' application, which – using heart rate sensors – detected concentration levels of test participants, attending a conference at FACT. When a drop in concentration was detected, the Augmented Reality application generated virtual objects to help re-engage participants attention.

In the context of the exhibition, the work by Manifest AR – permeating the physical boundaries of the building, extending into the city and the virtual realm – proposed a more responsive, and 'porous' gallery model, distributed through technology. Augmented Reality technology also holds subversive potential, as artists working in the virtual realm do not require the permission of curators or institutions to present their work. *Turning FACT Inside Out* was the first show in which Manifest AR as a group were invited and commissioned to produce new work for an exhibition. The collective's previous work usually involved uninvited interventions, e.g. in MoMa or at the Venice Biennale where the artists placed their virtual art in gallery spaces (MoMa, in 2010) or created their own virtual pavilions (at Venice Biennale 2011).<sup>36</sup>

The key ambition for the work of Manifest AR in the context of the exhibition was to test the potential of Augmented Reality technology as both an artistic tool as well as a participatory creative platform, which grants the audience status of active users, who activate the work as participants, players and co-creators of the virtual realm. However, testing new technology and engaging the audience

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34 Manifest AR, 2013. 'Biomer Skelter'. Online. Available at: <https://manifestarblog.wordpress.com/biomer-skelters/>. Accessed: July 23, 2013.

35 Manifest AR, 2013. 'Invisible ARTaffects. Project Document'. Available on FACT hard drive. p. 2.

36 See Manifest AR, 2013. 'We AR in MOMA'. Online. Available at: <http://www.sndrv.nl/moma/>. Accessed: July 20, 2013 and Manifest AR, 2013. 'Manifest AR Venice Biennial Intervention'. Online. Available at: <http://manifestarblog.wordpress.com/venice2011/>. Accessed: July 20, 2013.

with it posed significant challenges. Given that all MANifest AR works were prototypes and works in progress, shown at FACT for the very first time, they functioned as beta-tests within the exhibition, revealing many 'teething' problems. Not all the pieces worked as intended, e.g. Mark Skwarek's *Diminished City*, was designed as a tool for 'erasing' parts of the immediate environment outside FACT (by superimposing a virtual layer on physical elements when viewed through an iPad installed in the foyer). However, the virtual layer, augmentation, was not properly integrating with the view of the physical environment and the effect of 'erasure' was not fully achieved.

Technical difficulties with prototyping AR applications were not the only ones with Manifest AR commissions. Presenting the works in an exhibition format and engaging the audience with such complex work also presented various challenges. *Biomer Skelters*, required audience members to wear biosensors (heart rate monitors) and as such it was not feasible to make it available for the audience to use throughout the exhibitions. It was only through a series of workshops that the audience was able to engage with the project which limited the audience numbers for the project. For security reasons, iPads, which were used for projects such as *FACT Sky Museum*, were attached to a desk on which they were presented with a wire making it less comfortable for the audience to use and limiting the area onto which augments could be superimposed. Since iPads were only used inside the building, this meant that the audience members were not actually able to see their writing on the sky. Instead it was placed above their head within FACT building. It was possible for the audience to use their own mobile devices to interact with the project, but it involved downloading software onto their devices making the process less immediate.

Table 5 Manifest AR, *Invisible ARtffects* – project information summary.

| Artist/<br>country                                      | Title/Date/<br>Previous<br>work or<br>a new com-<br>mission               | Type of<br>work   | Elements of<br>the work/<br>installation  | Location                          | Key<br>ambition   | Key<br>challenge  | Budget  |
|---|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Manifest AR/<br>various (see<br>below)                  | <i>Invisible<br/>ARtffects</i><br>2013<br><br>New com-<br>missions        | Augmented<br>Reality (AR)<br>applications                       | Various (see<br>below)  | FACT foyer/<br>Outside/<br>Online | Test the po-<br>tential of AR<br>technology<br>as an artistic<br>tool, and<br>participatory<br>creative plat-<br>form for the<br>audience | Complexity<br>of the differ-<br>ent works,<br>which made<br>it difficult to<br>communi-<br>cate to the<br>public  | £4000 (total<br>budget al-<br>located from<br>FACT for<br>all 6 works<br>detailed<br>below) |
| Will Pappen-<br>heimer (US),<br>Zachary<br>Brady (US)   | <i>FACT Sky<br/>Museum</i><br>2013<br><br>New com-<br>mission             | AR applica-<br>tion<br>(Sky Write),<br>video docu-<br>mentation | AR mobile<br>application,<br>iPad, video<br>documen-<br>tation,<br>monitor                                  | FACT foyer/<br>Outside/<br>Online | Engage the<br>audience<br>in creating<br>virtual mes-<br>sages and<br>contribute<br>to FACT's Sky<br>Museum                               | Secu-<br>rity concerns<br>limited the<br>use of iPads<br>to inside of<br>FACT   | Included in<br>the overall<br>budget<br>(above)   |
| Will Pap-<br>penheimer<br>(US),<br>Tamiko Thiel<br>(US) | <i>Biomer<br/>Skelter</i> ,<br>2013<br><br>New com-<br>mission            | AR applica-<br>tion, video<br>documen-<br>tation                | AR mobile<br>application,<br>mobile heart<br>rate sensors,<br>iPad, video<br>documen-<br>tation,<br>monitor | FACT foyer/<br>Outside/<br>Online | Engage the<br>audience as<br>players in<br>the game   | Preparation<br>required to<br>take part in<br>the game,<br>(fitting<br>audience<br>with heart<br>rate sensors)<br>limited the<br>possibil-<br>ity of wider<br>audience<br>participation | Included in<br>the overall<br>budget<br>(above) with<br>additional<br>support <sup>39</sup> |
| John Craig<br>Freeman<br>(US), Scott<br>Kildall (US)    | <i>Things We<br/>Have Lost</i><br>2013<br><br>New com-<br>mission         | AR objects,<br>video docu-<br>mentation                         | AR objects,<br>video docu-<br>mentation,<br>monitor   | FACT foyer/<br>Outside/<br>Online | Engage the<br>audience<br>with the<br>piece   | No sig-<br>nificant<br>challenges   | Included in<br>the overall<br>budget<br>(above)   |
| John Cleater<br>(US)                                    | <i>I Must be<br/>Seeing<br/>Things</i><br>2013<br><br>New com-<br>mission | Drawings,<br>AR objects   | Book of<br>drawings, AR<br>objects, iPad<br>mini with<br>AR viewer<br>application                           | FACT foyer                        | Engage the<br>audience<br>with the<br>piece   | No sig-<br>nificant<br>challenges   | Included in<br>the overall<br>budget<br>(above)   |
| Mark<br>Skwarek<br>(US),<br>Animesh<br>Anand<br>(US)    | <i>Diminished<br/>City</i><br>2013<br><br>New com-<br>mission             | AR applica-<br>tion   | iPad with AR<br>application   | FACT foyer                        | Engage the<br>audience as<br>users of the<br>piece, 'eras-<br>ing' parts of<br>the city   | Design prob-<br>lems; the<br>application<br>did not work<br>as intended<br>and the<br>effect of era-<br>sure was not<br>achieved  | Included in<br>the overall<br>budget<br>(above)   |
| Sander<br>Veenhof<br>(NL)                               | <i>Human<br/>Conference<br/>Sensor</i><br>2013<br><br>New com-<br>mission | Video docu-<br>mentation  | Video docu-<br>mentation  | FACT foyer                        | Engage the<br>audience<br>with the<br>piece   | The piece<br>was not<br>easily com-<br>municable  | Included in<br>the overall<br>budget<br>(above)   |



#### 4.2.6. Uncoded Collective, *TransEurope Slow*

FACT foyer

*TransEurope Slow* was an interactive installation which invited the viewers to take a virtual bike ride through the streets of Liverpool and other European cities. The audience, sitting on a bench in front of a monitor, were required to pedal in order to activate the video. The footage for the installation was collected during a workshop with community groups in Liverpool (Breckfield and North Everton Cycle Clubs), who guided the artists through the streets of Liverpool on bikes, telling stories as they made their way through the city. The virtual journey seamlessly switched from Liverpool to Rotterdam and Madrid, linking the cities and highlighting their differences and similarities.

*TransEurope Slow* was produced as part of Connecting Cities initiative, which is a European and worldwide network of cities and cultural organisations, aiming to build up a connected infrastructure of media facades, urban screens and projection sites, used to produce and disseminate artistic and social content.<sup>38</sup> In the context of the exhibition, the project not only referred, in quite a literal way, to the context of *inside* and *outside*, linking FACT with Liverpool and other European cities, but it was also important as the only project in the exhibition produced in collaboration with local audiences. For the 10th anniversary of the building, this work built on FACT's long history of working with communities in the city, outside of the gallery context, and championing participatory practice. *TransEurope Slow* – although relatively uncomplicated in terms of technology it used – presented



Fig. 51 Uncoded Collective, *TransEurope Slow*, installation view FACT foyer. Image courtesy of FACT.

37 *Biomer Skelter* project was supported by a grant (13,000 USD) and student assistantship from the Verizon Thinkfinity Initiative for Innovative Teaching, Technology and Research at Pace University and the Siedenburg School of Information Science, secured by the artists. Principal investigator, Will Pappenheimer.

38 Connecting, Cities, 2014. 'About Connecting Cities'. Online. Available at: <http://www.connectingcities.net/about-connecting-cities>. Accessed: January 20, 2014.

problems with technical sustainability. The interactive aspect, allowing audience to cycle on the virtual ride, activating the video footage by pedaling, failed on several occasions, and turned out not to be sustainable.

Table 6 Uncoded Collective, *TransEurope Slow* – project information summary.

| Artist/<br>country   | Title/Date/<br>Previous<br>work or<br>a new com-<br>mission    | Type of<br>work | Elements of<br>the work/<br>installation                     | Location   | Key<br>ambition  | Key<br>challenge   | Budget |
|--|--|-----------------|--|------------|--|--|--------|
| Uncoded<br>Collective:<br>Victor Diaz<br>(ES),<br>Sergio Galán<br>(ES) | <i>TransEurope<br/>Slow</i><br>2013<br><br>New com-<br>mission | Installation    | Video foot-<br>age, moni-<br>tor, wooden<br>bench,<br>pedals | FACT foyer | Create an<br>interactive<br>journey<br>through<br>Liverpool in<br>collabora-<br>tion with<br>local com-<br>munities.<br>Engage the<br>audience<br>with the<br>piece as<br>users, acti-<br>vating video<br>and taking<br>virtual bike<br>ride | Technical<br>problems<br>with the<br>mainte-<br>nance of<br>the piece<br>through-<br>out the<br>exhibition;<br>failure of the<br>interactive<br>aspect | £1500  |

### 4.3. Staging and framing

Staging the exhibition, which was so complex, and included so many new commissions, was a real challenge. Apart from the usual complexities and contingencies of a technical set up, there were health and safety issues relating to the open fire and smoke in the gallery, noise and vibration going into the cinemas, as well as logistic of getting a few tonnes of tarmac into the gallery. These were only some of the challenges that FACT's production team had to deal with. However, given the complexity of the show, the installation, handled by Arciform and FACT's technical team, went surprisingly smoothly. This is mostly due to the fact that Arciform, a company set up by previous senior FACT Production team members, had over 10 years of experience in delivering very complex work at FACT.

From a curatorial point of view, it was the question of how to frame the show and communicate it to the public that presented significant difficulties in the run up to the exhibition. The variety and complexity of the show made it difficult to clearly define and hence communicate in a simple and direct manner. The marketing team placed a strong emphasis on the messaging around the exhibition being accessible and communicative and the texts provided by the curatorial team were often perceived as 'too curatorial' in their style. Most of the texts about the exhibition, including press releases, were re-written by marketing team, sometimes leading to discussions and disagreements over the messaging. Several meeting were held to discuss the messaging around the exhibition, which proved to be difficult to pin down; the open framework of the exhibition as an invitation for artists to turn FACT inside out perhaps avoided the pitfalls of being too prescriptive, but it was also rather vague. As the marketing team noted during the exhibition evaluation meeting, the main messages kept changing and even within the curatorial team there was no consensus around the key messages.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> FACT, 'Turning FACT Inside Out Evaluation Meeting Notes'.

The complex nature of some of the works, such as Manifest AR's projects, which not only included six new pieces but also involved complicated technological prototyping, (such as linking biosensing with the process of generating augments) complicated the issue of communicating the show even further. The artists expected that the innovative technological aspect – which was significant part of the pieces, would be properly explained and accounted for – making the task of communicating the work to the public in a simple and accessible way, a real challenge for the marketing team and Curatorial Assistant responsible for producing the informational texts accompanying the exhibition.

There were also discussions about how to communicate the *Fracking Future* piece. HeHe and the Art Catalyst (who co-commissioned and co-curated *Fracking Futures*) were keen for the press information to communicate that FACT was actually doing the exploratory drilling, considering the press releases as part of the piece. The artists wanted to create a press campaign with spoof of a local newspaper running news that FACT started exploratory drilling and submit an a pre-application for shale gas exploration to the City Council. There were also plans to have news headlines such as 'Fracking FACT', 'Shale gas discovered under FACT', 'Fracking triggers earthquake at FACT', 'Fracking protesters storm FACT', 'FACT to become energy exporter in 2020' to run across media facade.<sup>40</sup> Mixing HeHe's 'FACT fracking campaign' with the marketing information campaign about the entire show was difficult to do, and discussions were held whether this was the best approach. In the end there was no significant element of 'fracking at FACT' media campaign, and the main press information about the show did not mention specifically that FACT was *actually* fracking. However, the information panel in the gallery directly stated that FACT 'commissioned artistic engineers to begin exploratory test to shale gas' and that the explorations have found that there was shale gas under FACT ('at least 20 trillion cubic feet') and that 'this energy will be used to ensure the future operation of FACT' and will be shared with the community.<sup>41</sup> Artists talking to the press tried to keep the issue ambiguous, making some reviewers state: 'it's obvious that fracking cannot really be taking part in the gallery, but you quite never know with artists, especially the ones exhibiting at FACT'.<sup>42</sup>

The press releases, especially those published closer to the opening, increasingly framed the exhibition as presenting work that is *provocative*, *controversial* and *risky*. One of the press releases prepared in the run up to the opening was entitled 'Art and Politics Collide at FACT This Summer' announcing that 'this summer at FACT, Liverpool, a selection of international provocative artists tackle some of the most pressing controversial and literally ground-breaking political issues of today'.<sup>43</sup> The press release concluded with a quotation from Mike Stubbs stating that the exhibition 'will be provocative and it will ask some big questions, once again showcasing our commitment to making FACT a safe space for risky conversations'.<sup>44</sup>

Naturally, the marketing strategy was designed to attract attention and build expectations in the run up to the opening. However, stating in the opening paragraph that the exhibition tackled 'some of the most controversial, pressing and literally ground breaking political issues of today'<sup>45</sup>

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40 HeHe, 'Fracking Futures Proposal'. p. 2.

41 FACT, 'HeHe Wall Panel'. p. 1.

42 Davies, L. 'Interview: What to Expect from the Exhibition Turning FACT Inside Out'. *Liverpool Daily Post*, June 13, 2013.

43 FACT, 2013. 'Art and Politics Collide at FACT This Summer. Turning FACT Inside Out Press Release'. Available on FACT hard drive. [no pagination]. See Appendix 1.3.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

was only referring to HeHe's *Fracking Futures* piece, positioning it at the very centre of the exhibition. *Fracking Futures* was an easy choice for the lead in terms of press release; it was the most spectacular and at the same time most topical, as well as offering a clear link the theme of *turning FACT Inside Out*. However, leading the marketing campaign with *Fracking Futures* also posed a risk of hijacking the entire exhibition, which was becoming a show about political activism. Although, bringing up the notion of 'activism' in the context of *Turning FACT Inside Out* was highly disputed and deemed inaccurate by the curatorial team, this still was how the marketing team insisted on promoting the exhibition.

#### 4.4. Reception of the show

There was substantial media coverage in the run up to the exhibition with many local and national newspapers posting information about the exhibition. The marketing strategy worked in terms of generating a significant interest and attracting large audience to the opening event. However, the strategy of framing the exhibition as 'tackling pressing political issues', pointing mainly to the HeHe's piece resulted in *Fracking Futures* receiving most of the attention.

On the opening day, BBC Radio Merseyside hosted a 2.5 hour-long debate about fracking, broadcasted from FACT.<sup>46</sup> The broadcast started with a presentation of the exhibition, including interviews with artists and references to FACT's 10th anniversary, and then moved onto a long debate around fracking. The majority of the exhibition reviews, which appeared in the press following the opening, also focused on the *Fracking Futures* piece. An article in *The Guardian* 'Indoor Fracking Installation Seeks to Provoke Debate' was dedicated almost entirely to the HeHe's piece with brief mention of other artists.<sup>47</sup> The *Art Monthly* did not review the exhibition although it dedicated an article to HeHe with a particular focus on *Fracking Futures*.<sup>48</sup> Also, the widely read and highly regarded art blog *We Make Money Not Art* reviewed only the HeHe piece.<sup>49</sup> The *New Scientist* published text 'Art installation brings you face to face with fracking',<sup>50</sup> and *Click Liverpool* headlined 'New Art Installation Highlights Fracking Controversy'.<sup>51</sup> *Museum Journal*, inspired by HeHe's installation, posed the question 'how should museums tackle environmental issues and engage the public with them?'<sup>52</sup>

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46 Philips, R. *Keeping the Merseyside in Touch with the World*. BBC Radio Merseyside. Radio programme, broadcasted: June 13, 2013.

47 Brown, M. 2013. 'Indoor Fracking Installation Seeks to Provoke Debate'. *Guardian*. June 17. Online. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/jun/17/indoor-fracking-installation-provoke-debate>. Accessed: June 20, 2014.

48 Dickson, B. 2013. 'HeHe'. *Art Monthly*. Issue 370. October. pp. 22-23.

49 Debbaty, R. 2013. 'Artists in Laboratories. HeHe'. *We Make Money Not Art*. Online. Available at: <http://we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2013/06/ail-artists-in-laboratories-ep-28.php>. Accessed: June 20, 2013.

50 Ravilious, K. 2013. 'Art Installation Brings You Face to Face with Fracking'. *New Scientist*. July 18. Online. Available at: <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn23889-art-installation-brings-you-face-to-face-with-fracking.html>. Accessed: August 25, 2013

51 Masters, J.E. 2013. 'New Art Installation Highlights Fracking Controversy'. *Click Liverpool*. June 18. Online. Available at: <http://www.clickliverpool.com/culture/culture/1219070-new-art-installation-highlights-fracking-controversy-picture-gallery.html>. Accessed: June 20, 2014.

52 Kendal, G. 2013. 'Friends of the Earth'. *Museum Journal*. Issue 113/09, pp. 28-31. Online. Available at: <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/features/01092013-friends-of-the-earth>. Accessed: September 20, 2013.

One of most detailed reviews of the exhibition, which paid attention to the overall concept, and all the works was posted on *Seven Street*, a blog focusing on Liverpool's cultural scene.<sup>53</sup> The review is interesting as it encapsulates the strengths and weaknesses of the show but it also reveals perceptions of FACT as an organisation written from the perspective of an insider of the Liverpool arts scene. The review described the exhibition as 'dizzying, playful and occasionally bemusing'. Acknowledging that the idea was 'apt' for the celebration of 10th anniversary. The reviewer describes the variety of experiences on offer, worth quoting at length:

'A fracking drill burrows into the building's foundations, augmented reality takes artworks outside and onto Liverpool's streets, virtual bike rides allow us to teleport from Liverpool to Rotterdam and Madrid via pedals and a bench. Gallery 2 throbs with the heartbeat of the building – the daily hubbub of the behind-the-scenes spaces – and opens up the windows to Wood Street for the first time. Blinking and staring, viewers resemble Jim Carrey discovering the world beyond his previous perceptual boundaries in *The Truman Show*: seeing this forever dark and slightly claustrophobic space opened up to the cobbles and cars is oddly discombobulating. Considering this amounts to opening a window it's both genius and blindingly obvious.

The decision to open up some previously fenced-off spaces has paid dividends. FACT now seems more open, more inclusive, a more fun space full of games and unusual experiences – a living, breathing building – and exhibitions that challenge visitors to respond and participate are more satisfying than the mute passivity of watching a 60-minute video on a small screen from an unforgiving wooden bench.<sup>54</sup>

The reviewer points out that FACT have had problems attracting 'casual' audiences, and point to the 'awkward medium of video installation' as a potential reason for that. FACT is praised for making effort to engage audience with more 'playful, accessible installations' and that the galleries seem much busier as a result. 'Dumbed down?' asks the reviewer, 'Arguably, but we're all for it':

'Anyone who suffered the deathly pomposity of *Critic's Choice* or the misfiring pot-pourri of *Nothing Special* back in 2005 and 2003 respectively would surely agree that FACT has discovered its place within the city and arts scene. Little has been lost in this gentle transition over the years while much has been gained – it's not uncommon to see children in FACT, pensioners baffling at a rumbling installation or *Ropewalks* waifs and strays exploring the building in benign bemusement.'<sup>55</sup>

The reviewer points that galleries need to take risks, such as the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition, emphasising both the gains and the challenges of such risk taking. 'It's oddly fitting, then, that *Turning FACT Inside Out* has greatness and mediocrity alike' summarizes the reviewer.<sup>56</sup> As less successful aspects of the exhibition the review refers to Lambert's piece ('one of the most eye catching, if utterly redundant, pieces ever seen in the gallery'),<sup>57</sup> the 'trite' arrangement of Nina Edge's piece, and the malfunctions of technology.<sup>58</sup>

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53 Brown, R. 2013. 'Review: Turning FACT Inside Out'. *Seven Streets*. June 13. Online. Available at: <http://www.sevenstreets.com/review-turning-fact-inside-out/>. Accessed: June 20, 2013. See Appendix 1.4.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

## 4.5. Reflecting on *Turning FACT Inside Out*

### 4.5.1. Exhibition

Indeed, malfunctioning technology was one of the biggest challenges throughout the exhibition. As already noted, Hehe's piece posed many maintenance problems, and just three weeks after the exhibition opened, the gallery was required to close to visitors, for a couple of days, due to problems with Arduino, which controlled the running of the piece. The problems repeated themselves a few times, causing the work to be non-operational for about two weeks in total. Troubleshooting and handling the maintenance was further complicated by the fact that the Technical Manager who worked on the exhibition left FACT three days after the show opened and, hence, any expertise required for troubleshooting needed to be brought in.

Manifest AR pieces – as prototypes and beta-tests – also presented many challenges. As previously noted, not all of the pieces worked as intended; some due to the shortcomings of the design (e.g., *Diminished City*) and some due to the limitations of the exhibition format (e.g., *Biomer Skelters* required the users to be fit with biosensors, which was not feasible in an exhibition context) or very pragmatic reasons such as security considerations, restricting the use of iPads to inside of FACT building and limiting the area for viewing the augments (which for pieces such as *FACT Sky Museum* meant that viewing the drawings on the sky would require the audience to download software onto their devices, making the process less immediate).

The difficulties with presenting and maintaining technologically complex work, as discussed above, clearly pointed out the limitations of the exhibition format, suggesting that a traditional gallery exhibition, running for 14 weeks (although *Turning FACT Inside Out* was an unusually long exhibition) may not be the most suitable platform for presenting more radically experimental work, which might be best delivered and presented under temporary circumstances.

The technical complexities and maintenance problems had obvious implications for the audience engagement with the show. Although based on a limited number of the audience questionnaires (57) collected by the marketing team, the exhibition was generally well received, and respondents found it 'interesting' and 'thought provoking'.<sup>59</sup> However, there were also negative comments. The fact that the Gallery 1 was closed on several occasions was a contributing factor. Issues around the coherency of the show were raised with some respondents commenting that it was hard to understand what the show was about and that it was not what they expected from a 10th anniversary exhibition.<sup>60</sup> Some described it as 'disorientating' and 'challenging'.<sup>61</sup> There were also a high percentage of respondents who spoke to the Gallery Assistants indicating that it was difficult to understand some of the pieces.<sup>62</sup>

Indeed, aside from technical and maintenance difficulties, another significant challenge throughout the exhibition was engaging the audience with presented works. Trying to communicate the

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59 Based on the team's discussion during *Turning FACT Inside Out* evaluation meeting on November 29, 2013. See FACT, 'Turning FACT Inside Out Evaluation Meeting Notes'. Available on FACT hard drive. [no pagination].

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

different pieces to the audience and explain how to engage with them was a difficult task and put a lot of pressure on the Gallery Assistants, making their work unsustainable in the long term. Many works, especially Manifest AR's projects, were so complex that the Gallery Assistants reported being confused about the work themselves which therefore made it difficult for them to communicate the work to the public.<sup>63</sup> According to the feedback from the Gallery Assistants, even relatively uncomplicated works such as the *Chute* piece in the Gallery 2 required more explanation than the wall panels provided, and it was noted that visitors tended to get engaged with the work after they had spoken to Gallery Assistants, otherwise they thought it 'was just an empty room', and walked out.<sup>64</sup>

Similar problems were encountered with Nina Edge's piece, *Ten Intentions*, which required the process of engagement to be moderated by explaining the work to the audience and encouraging them to interact. Originally, a series of meetings with community and local groups, who would be invited to use the work as a space for meetings and discussions that would feed into the project, were planned. However, soon before the exhibition started, it turned out that there was a misunderstanding regarding who was responsible for animating the project. From FACT's perspective it was understood that the process of instigating and moderating discussion was part of the work. The artist however expected FACT to take on a more proactive role in facilitating the public engagement. In the end the process of engaging public with the themes proposed by the artist was not very successful, and most of the voices and opinions recorded through Siri and on the blog were rather laconic, bringing little substance and merit to the discussions proposed.<sup>65</sup>

The difficulties with Nina Edge's piece, discussed above, clearly point out that moderating an engaged and sustained discussion through work presented in traditional gallery exhibition context is indeed difficult to do, and requires a lot of time and effort, which need to be planned and budgeted for in order to result in meaningful discussion. Despite the democratic potential of new media tools, which provide access to the digital public sphere, open platforms do not in themselves guarantee that discussion, especially valid and meaningful one, will take place.

#### 4.5.2. Curatorial process

Curating *Turning FACT Inside Out* was a collaborative process on many levels. It involved not only both curators (Mike Stubbs and myself) but also the majority of FACT's programming team, including Programme Producer Ana Botella, Curatorial Assistant Lesley Taker, Projects Coordinator Julia Youngman, as well as input from the Head of Collaborations Kathryn Dempsey, and Laura Yates from the *TenantSpin* team, who led on the development of *TransEurope Slow*, facilitating the process of collaboration between the artists and local communities. The project by HeHe was co-commissioned by Art Catalyst and Rob La Frenais, Curator at Art Catalyst, was involved in the curatorial and production process of that particular work. Since the Manifest AR works were originally commissioned as part of FACT's involvement in the ARTSENSE project, led by Research and Development team, the Head of Research and Development, Roger McKinley played a key role in planning, curating and the development of the Manifest AR projects. The research and development process of Manifest AR work also included scientists from Liverpool John Moores University, who contributed their ex-

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63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Browsing through the *Ten Intentions* web site, it becomes obvious that most of the comments recorded on it are laconic, often trivial and irrelevant. See *Ten Intentions*, 2013. Online. Available at: <http://www.10intentions.co.uk/>. Accessed: December 20, 2013.

expertise with respect to the biosensing technology.<sup>66</sup> The technical team at FACT also played key role in defining the feasibility of projects, in effect, shaping the exhibition (e.g. it was the technical and production team's decision that *FACTORY* – the original proposal by HeHe for *Turning FACT Inside Out* – was rejected due to the feasibility issues identified by them).

The processes of curation, production, research and development behind *Turning FACT Inside Out* were intertwined and the different roles were difficult to separate. Input from the Curatorial Assistant and the Programme Producer were crucial for shaping the project, especially at the stage of the re-thinking, and brainstorming ideas for what was effectively a new exhibition at the loss of ARTSENSE funding in November 2012. *Turning FACT Inside Out* was also the first FACT exhibition in which FACT's Research and Development team had such significant curatorial input, and presented work – although on a much smaller scale than originally anticipated – developed by the R&D department. Curators, the Research and Development Manager, and scientists from LJMU worked closely with artists to shape the project and contributed to the development of the software. In this respect the development process of Manifest AR projects can be seen as characteristic for new media production, where the boundaries between different processes and roles are blurred, and where the curatorial process is often collaborative and the curators are increasingly become *content* providers as much as *context* providers,<sup>67</sup> (as discussed in the contextual review, Section 1.2.3.).

In case of *Turning FACT Inside Out* the curatorial emphasis on content rather than context provision was also due to the practical aspects, such as limited time and resources available for the exhibition. Due to the last minute changes in the funding situation and the need to rethink the exhibition in a very short time, the efforts of the entire team were focused on delivering the exhibition, and making sure that newly commissioned works would be ready on time. Between discussing proposals with artists, checking feasibility with the technical team, debating the financial viability of particular projects, we were contacting potential funders,<sup>68</sup> checking prices for materials, and planning the exhibition delivery logistics – all of these in close collaboration between all exhibition team members. Constraints of the budget and resources, given the scale and the ambition of the exhibition, shifted the emphasis from curatorial tasks to production and delivery of projects.

The collaborative nature of the curatorial process was also, to some extent, dictated by the nature of the exhibition. As the anniversary show, *Turning FACT Inside Out* was also a presentation platform for showcasing FACT's different activities: research and innovation, community engagement, and international collaborations. However, despite many conversations and attempts to work together Collaboration and Engagement were not involved in any significant way in the process of shaping the exhibition, which was the reason for a fair criticism of the curatorial process by Collaboration's team.<sup>69</sup> The only – although very important – input from the Collaborations team was leading the community engagement for the *TransEurope Slow* project by Laura Yates, from the *Tenantspin* team.

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66 Research and expertise of Prof. Stephen Fairclough and Dr Kiel Gileade (from LJMU) in physiological computing was crucial for the development of ManifestAR projects, especially *Biomer Skelter* project.

67 Cook, S. '2003. Towards a Theory of the Practice of Curating New media Art'. In M. Townsend (ed). 2003. *Beyond the Box, Diverging Curatorial Practices*. Banff: Banff Centre Press. p. 174.

68 For example from The Polish Cultural Institute, and the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, which were successful and we managed to raise additional funds (£ 8,000) for Katarzyna Krakowiak's piece.

69 During one of the programme meetings the exhibition planning process was criticized for having not involved the Collaborations' team in any sustained way, despite claiming that the curatorial process was open and collaborative. (Krzemien Barkley, A. 2012. 'Turning FACT Inside Out Curatorial Meeting Notes, December 7, FACT.' [no pagination]).



One of the reasons for the lack of involvement of some parts of the programming is very pragmatic, that is the Collaboration and Engagement programme have a small budget for projects allocated to them, and since the *Turning FACT Inside Out* had already proven to be very expensive, there was no additional funding left to develop the engagement process. Collaboration and Engagement often have to fundraise and it takes much longer to secure funding for their projects. The loss of ARTSENSE funding and the resulting last minute changes to the shape of the exhibition also meant that the exhibition development took place very late in comparison to the usual exhibition production time-frames making it difficult for Collaboration and Engagement to propose projects and contribute to the exhibition. Even though the exhibition offered potential for additional community engagement and educational projects (i.e. educational workshops around Manifest AR projects or community debates in relation to the *Ten Intentions* piece) the late blooming of the exhibition development meant that the Collaboration and Engagement contribution would have been merely to deliver activities within an already finished exhibition, which is in conflict with the way in which they prefer to operate.

Despite lack of significant contributions from the Collaboration's team, the curatorial process for *Turning FACT Inside Out* was inherently collaborative and distributed across the team working on the exhibition. According to Stubbs, the curatorial process for *Turning FACT Inside Out*, was an example of how the Producer Model, which FACT is moving towards, might work.<sup>70</sup> The Producer Model, as discussed earlier (Section 2.3.), proposes creating project teams, whereby specialists (curators, academics, developers) join the FACT team on a freelance or associated basis to work on specific projects. The projects are led and managed by FACT producers, with the specialists playing the crucial role in the development of the projects. The Producer Model is also envisaged as providing a framework and a mode of working within which the different areas of FACT programming can be integrated.

The example of the curatorial and production processes behind *Turning FACT Inside Out*, provides a basis for discussing the advantages and limitations of the Producer Model and collaborative ways of working that underpin it. The exhibition brought together different programming areas at FACT (Research and Development, Exhibitions), and involved substantial external contributions from scientists from LJMU and from co-curators – Rob La Frenais from the Art Catalyst and myself – drawing in knowledge, skills and expertise. Working in a highly collaborative mode, especially in new media production context, where the curatorial, production and development roles are intertwined, means that the curatorial control and authorship is distributed across the team.

However, this can also pose certain problems. With the curatorial process being so distributed, the authorial claim and responsibility for the final shape of the show is weakened as exemplified by the struggles over the meaning of *Turning FACT Inside Out*. The position of adjunct, or external curator not grounded in the organisation, can also be rather weak. The collective curatorial team work, without a strong curatorial steer, can sometimes lead to a lack of clarity in defining the ideas of the exhibition or a project, which in turn causes problems with communicating the programme to the public. Additionally, the curatorial framework for *Turning FACT Inside Out* was proposed to be very open, which on one hand was not too prescriptive and resisted closure – the exhibition was akin to an experiment, bringing together artists, artwork and audience together, allowing for the exhibition to unfold. On the other hand, the openness deepened the lack of clarity in messaging around the exhibition, which resulted from the already complex curatorial negotiations of meaning happening behind the scenes.

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70 Krzemien Barkley, 'Turning FACT Inside Out Curatorial Meeting Notes.'

It is important to note that the show was not accompanied by any larger curatorial or critical text. This was to do with the difficulties of agreeing on a clear narrative about the show, but it is also symptomatic of a more general decrease in the numbers of catalogues, curatorial texts, and FACT's critical contextualisation of its own practices.<sup>71</sup> With no significant authorial claim over the exhibition, the messaging around *Turning FACT Inside Out* was more focused on promoting FACT as activist, risky, controversial – a 'safe space for risky conversations'<sup>72</sup> in the process of self-fashioning and branding.

#### 4.5.3. Institutional workings

*Turning FACT Inside Out* – as a 10th anniversary exhibition – was proposed as an invitation to re-think FACT, in which invited artists would participate in this process of institutional self-reflection. Thus it is important to ask what has been learnt about FACT in the process? Referring back to some of the questions posed in the curatorial brief we can ask what was found regarding to the workings of FACT as a building, a platform and an institution, and what does FACT 'need in order to remain relevant going forwards?'<sup>73</sup>

*Turning FACT Inside Out* revealed both the strengths and weaknesses of FACT's institutional workings. The unquestionable strength of FACT is its ability to develop and produce very complex and demanding work. The technical expertise, knowledge and skill base developed within FACT over the last decade is indeed significant. The fact that the exhibition delivery, which involved setting up and producing many complex works within a very tight timeframe, went without any problems, is a proof of the great experience and skills of the technical team, as well as the highly efficient work of the exhibition team. The problem is retaining this knowledge within the organisation. As already mentioned, the set up was managed by former Senior Producers and members of FACT's technical team who now work as an independent company (Arciform). The fact that the knowledge and skills of FACT's team are its invaluable assets was also confirmed by problems with the exhibition maintenance, after one of the technicians left shortly after the exhibition opened.

The knowledge and skills base that FACT is able to draw upon and rely on is what makes it possible for FACT to take on experimental and highly demanding projects. Rob La Frenais, from the Arts Catalyst, reflecting on the process of collaborating on *Turning FACT Inside Out*, stated that FACT is a 'well oiled' institution in terms of its skills and experience in delivering complex work, which enables smaller organisations, such as the Arts Catalyst, to realise their projects.<sup>74</sup> He also commented that FACT is quite unusual in its openness to taking on challenging and experimental projects: 'one of the things we've liked about working with FACT is that you can come to FACT with ideas that nobody else would touch, [...] to be quite frank, the openness of FACT to ideas is quite unusual I think for a medium scale national venue like this.'<sup>75</sup>

However, one of the biggest challenges of *Turning FACT Inside Out*, observed also in other FACT's exhibitions, including *Robots and Avatars*, was the technical maintenance of the works throughout

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71 Whereas catalogues, co-edited by FACT, accompanied all exhibitions presented at FACT in 2010, between 2011 and September 2013 only three exhibitions (*Nam June Paik*, *Unexpected Guest* and *Art of Pop Video*) had catalogues. Those three catalogues were edited and published by partnering institutions: Tate Liverpool, Liverpool Biennial and Museum for Applied Arts in Cologne, respectively.

72 FACT, 'Art and Politics Collide at FACT This Summer'.

73 FACT, 'Turning FACT Inside Out Curatorial Brief'.

74 La Frenais, R. 2013. Interviewed by the author, June 14.

75 Ibid.

the duration of the show. The fact that technical sustainability problems occur on regular basis could be considered as part of the risk inscribed in the very nature of the organisation, as well as its commitment to showing and commissioning experimental work. However, it can also be considered as an argument that traditional gallery exhibition is not the most suitable platform for presenting technologically complex and experimental work which might be better presented in more flexible and temporary presentation formats, such as festivals.

Apart from the maintenance issues, communicating the different works as well as the overall concept of the exhibition to the public was one of the weak points of *Turning FACT Inside Out*. On one hand, as discussed above, the problems were partly due to the complexity of the works on show, which presented challenges even for the Gallery Assistants, as well as the curatorial struggles over the main narrative of the show. On the other hand, however, *Turning FACT Inside Out* is symptomatic of a larger problem with communicating FACT's programming to the public. A recent audience report, commissioned by FACT, highlighted problems with communication particularly of the Exhibitions programme, which poses general challenges due to the complex nature of work that FACT presents, but is often further exacerbated if the works are not operational, making the viewers confused as to the nature and purpose of the work.<sup>76</sup>

*Turning FACT Inside Out* also posed the important question about the future of gallery – what it needed in order to remain relevant. The artists HeHe, Steve Lambert and Nina Edge staged work that posed difficult questions or tackled pressing issues reiterating that FACT, and art galleries in general, are and need to remain predominantly public spaces where discussions around pressing, controversial issues can take place. So, has *Turning FACT Inside Out* provided this space for discussion? Was it really 'a safe space for risky conversations' as the press release stated?<sup>77</sup>

As evidenced by significant press coverage, the discussion around HeHe's piece certainly contributed to the national debate around the issue of fracking. However, this debate was already on going, stirred by exploratory drilling taking place in the areas of UK, including the North West and, although showing *Fracking Futures* was indeed very timely, it cannot be argued that exhibition at FACT itself raised awareness, or initiated this discussion around fracking. From the curatorial point of view, in the context of *Turning FACT Inside Out*, HeHe's piece was not intended as a consideration of the fracking issue *per se*, but rather as a humorous and ironic work pointing out the situation of art institutions in tough economic times, raising questions about the purpose of art institutions and whether closing the galleries and extracting gas might, in fact, be a better use of the space had the shale gas been discovered underneath it.

The difficulties with Nina Edge's piece, discussed above, clearly point out that moderating an engaged and sustained discussion through work presented in traditional gallery exhibition context is indeed difficult to do, and requires a lot of time and effort, which need to be planned. Creating platforms for discussion and providing tools for participating in the digital public sphere does not in itself guarantee that discussion, especially valid and meaningful one, will take place. Drawing on other examples of projects, discussed in the thesis, it is clear that FACT has indeed been engaged in and facilitated a range of difficult discussions throughout the years – through projects such as *Tenantspin*, and more recently *Veterans in Practice*. It has

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76 Wafer, Hadley, 'FACT. Audience Research Report' pp. 31-33.

77 FACT, 'Art and Politics Collide at FACT This Summer.'

also supported artists who have been actively engaged in the debates crucial for Liverpool and its communities, such as Nina Edge, whose significant activist work in city was one of the reasons for inviting the artist to take part in FACT's anniversary exhibition. However, it could be argued that where FACT has been most successful in gathering and sustaining meaningful debate is where it has been grounded in its work with communities and has thus grown out of sustained engagement with the context and so been properly contextualised.

The difficulties with creating a space for discussion within *Turning FACT Inside Out* might suggest that timeframe of the exhibition is not the most conducive to a sustained and meaningful dialogue, but also perhaps that *this* particular exhibition was not the most suitable context for such discussion. Referring back to the already quoted review, one of the impressions from visiting the exhibition was of that of an 'amusement park experience', especially with regard to the HeHe's *Fracking Future* piece, while Lambert's piece was described as having a feeling of an 'empty social media campaign that speaks of starting a conversation'.<sup>78</sup>

Given that the show was not properly contextualised (lack of curatorial text), and it was not grounded in other discussions at FACT (about art institutions, or fracking for that matter), the criticism of performing 'empty gestures' is perhaps justified. It was perhaps not clear why FACT wanted to be 'a safe space for risky conversations'. What kinds of risks was it prepared to take and why? Is it that the spectacle value of the show, contributing to the feeling of the exhibition as 'amusement park' overshadowed any potential for a more serious reflection? And was the potential for a serious discussion *really* there to begin with? Could it be that the artfulness of *Turning FACT Inside Out* was that of a PR campaign, a process of branding and 'manufacturing of a good will', so criticised by Adorno and Horkheimer in their analysis of the culture industries.<sup>79</sup> Is this *how capitalism works* for FACT?

These kinds of questions and criticisms are justified and can be fairly waged against *Turning FACT Inside Out*. Reflecting on the show and debating whether the invitation to FACT as 'safe space for risky conversations'<sup>80</sup> was just an empty gesture and part of a PR campaign, it is interesting to note a certain meaning shift which occurred within the exhibition. The piece *Capitalism Works For Me! True/False* was originally planned to be placed outside of FACT, on the Ropewalks Square. However, due to technical maintenance issues it was placed inside, in the cafe area, which was the only space that could accommodate such a large piece. The large letters of the sign were immediately visible from the entrance, and given the close proximity to the *Fracking Futures* piece, presented in the Gallery 1, which claimed that FACT started to get more funds for its operations, the sign *Capitalism Works for Me!* read like affirmative statement by FACT. The sense of irony, which bringing the two pieces together resulted in (*Capitalism Works for Me!* and *Fracking Futures*) was far greater than originally anticipated.

Drawing on this anecdote, the *Turning FACT Inside Out*, and processes behind the exhibition could be discussed as examples of *how capitalism works* for FACT. Arguably, FACT, similarly as other art institutions in current economic climate, is pressurised to develop and adopt more efficient business model and move towards more entrepreneurial culture. Central to this is developing attractive and strong brand through successful marketing strategies. In addition, operating successful business model requires cost effective production strategies, such as the Producer Model discussed above, which was

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78 Brown, 'Review: Turning FACT Inside Out'.

79 Adorno, *The Culture Industry*, p. 100.

80 FACT, 'Art and Politics Collide at FACT This Summer'.

the curatorial model for delivering the exhibition. *Turning FACT Inside Out* points to the risks involved in the move towards the entrepreneurial model of operations. The project-oriented and delivery focused approach, which the Producer model entails, might result in projects not being properly contextualised (as was the case with the exhibition) which can contribute to the institution losing sight of its role as a producer of knowledge, providing a valid platform for debate and exchange, fostering critical reflection on contemporary culture and society. In such case, the invitation of *Turning FACT Inside Out* directed to artists and audiences to take part in debates at FACT, which is allegedly a 'safe space for risky conversations', might be but a declaration and a marketing catchphrase.



## **Conclusion**





Combining different methodological tools including curatorial practice, case studies, interviews and participant observation, this study of an institution has investigated processes and models of working as well as the practicalities and challenges which are involved in curating contemporary art and, more broadly, cultural production and management. By examining FACT's curatorial and institutional practice, the research has described the institutional framework and curatorial approaches mobilised within the institution – particularly those developed in response to socially engaged and new media art – and articulates some of the challenges of working with such inherently hybrid sets of practices. The study provides a behind-the-scenes insight into the workings of an institution, particularly the processes behind exhibition development and production. The case study of *Turning FACT Inside Out* not only provided a detailed account of the curatorial and production processes of staging and framing the exhibition but has also revealed the contingencies and complexities of exhibition making and the construction and negotiations of meaning that take place in the process.

The dissertation builds a multi-layered picture of what is involved in the cultural production and running of an arts organisation. Art institutions – even those smaller and medium size institutions, such as FACT – emerge as an incredibly complex ecology of creative producers, artists, curators, audiences, artworks, professional networks and communities as well as funders and other stakeholders. Institutions are where, on a day-to-day basis, some of the most important discussions and decisions are taken regarding not only the kind of creative practice that is worth supporting, presenting to the public and archiving but also how those practices need to be mediated and disseminated. Studying the institution from the perspective of curatorial and production processes and mapping out wider institutional frameworks and operational models highlights the variety of factors that influence the decisions of curators and shape institutional practice.

The concluding chapter summarises the research findings regarding the curatorial and institutional practice of FACT and discusses them in the context of critical debates outlined in the contextual review. Building on the analysis in the thesis and drawing on the critical debates, it considers both advantages and limitations of curatorial and institutional models of working exemplified by FACT while pointing out wider implications of the findings for the practice of curators and art institutions, particularly those working in the context of new media and socially engaged practices.

## **Research findings**

### **Models of curatorial practice at FACT**

The analysis of FACT's curatorial and production practice described and examined different models of working with the most distinct ones being context-responsive and durational approaches underpinning the work of Collaboration and Engagement, and a strong tendency towards collaborative practice characteristic to all strands of programming.

#### Context-responsive

The context-responsive approach, which underpins the work of Collaboration and Engagement at FACT, encourages and facilitates artistic responses to cultural, social and geographic contexts placing a particular emphasis on the importance of working in an embedded way. Projects such as *Tenantspin* and *Veterans in Practice*, as well as *Waiting Room* commissions were all initiated and produced as a direct response to the needs of a particular community (older residents of the housing estate,

veterans, communities near newly built health centres). In facilitating responses to particular social contexts, all of the Collaboration and Engagement projects discussed in the thesis involve groups and communities in the design and delivery of the projects and artworks. Communities and groups involved act as consultants (*Waiting Room* commissions), project participants (*War Veteran, Waiting Room*), as well as creative producers (*Tenantspin, Veterans in Practice*). As corroborated through interviews with the Collaborations team, their approach is highly focused on the *process* and on participatory and collaborative modes of engagement where the involvement of communities is the constitutive element of artwork.

### Durational

The durational approach, also characteristic of the Collaboration and Engagement production model, implies working in a cumulative way, over a longer period of time, developing a sustained relationship with a particular context (community, groups of people, location). It is closely linked to the context-responsive model in that it implies working in an embedded way, but additionally it emphasises the need to account for the element of time as an important aspect of artists' practice, especially process-driven, community based and context specific work. As discussed in the contextual review (Section 1.2.2), the durational model is underpinned by the understanding of place and community as evolving and dynamic, rather than formed, and in accommodating the aspect of time, it allows for the element of change. As discussed regarding the *Tenantspin* project, working over long timeframes with one community allowed for the project participants to develop a set of skills and become creative producers in their own right and assume ownership of the project. As in the context-responsive approach, the focus is strongly on the *process* of project development and production in which sustained engagement and collaboration with specific community or a group over a period of time is the fundamental element of the work. The Collaboration and Engagement's durational and cumulative approach is also evident in the team's relationship with artists. The producers develop long-term relationships with artists, often working with the same artists on several projects. In this way they build a pool of artistic skills and expertise in social engagement while allowing for maturation of participatory models of working and ensuring the quality of the process as well as the project.

### Collaborative

Collaborative models of working are characteristic to all strands of FACT programming. In the context of both the Exhibitions and the AND festival, collaborations predominantly involved curators and institutions partnering up to deliver projects, providing an opportunity to debate ideas and exchange knowledge, as well as to share and bring together resources (funding and manpower) to produce larger events (such as the *Robots and Avatars* or the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibitions). Collaborative models of working are at the core of new media art production, which often requires different skill sets and expertise to be brought together. The curatorial process behind *Turning FACT Inside Out* could be considered as paradigmatically new media, where the collaborative production blurs the boundaries between different processes and roles and where the curators are increasingly becoming content providers as much as context providers.<sup>1</sup>

While collaborative practice within Exhibitions and AND predominantly involves curators and institutions working together, the Collaboration and Engagement production model places emphasis

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1 Cook, S. 2003. 'Towards a Theory of the Practice of Curating New Media Art.' In M. Townsend (ed). 2003. *Beyond the Box, Diverging Curatorial Practices*. Banff: Banff Centre Press. p. 174.

on the collaboration between artists and producers at FACT, on the one hand, and the communities or groups participating in the project with FACT on the other. In projects such as *Veteran in Practice* and *Tenantspin*, as well as the community commissions produced within *Waiting Rooms*, such as Alistair Eilbeck's *26,14,17*, collaborative process is constitutive of each project as it comes into being by means of the project participants working together with the artist-producer team on the development and delivery of the project. The work of Collaborations – as corroborated through interviews with the team members – is motivated by the democratising potential of collaborative models and the quality of the process of artistic collaboration over the period of the project is central to the criteria by which its success is measured.

Context-responsive, durational and collaborative models of working, examined at FACT, all have their different considerations, as detailed above, but what they share in common is that they shift emphasis from the role of curators as *authors* of exhibitions to that of *producers*, facilitating the process of artistic engagement with the context and managing all aspects of project development and delivery, increasingly focused on *content* rather than *context* provision. This shift is best exemplified by the Producer Model, which FACT is moving towards.

## **Models of institutional practice at FACT**

### The Producer Model

As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.), at the centre of FACT's strategic plan for the future is a move towards the Producer Model, which is an operational framework for design and delivery of the programme. The template for the Producer Model at FACT was provided by production strategies developed within the AND festival, which delivers its hybrid programme through multiple partnerships and project-based collaborations. The Producer Model entails creating small teams, tailored for a specific project, bringing together freelancers, specialists and FACT staff, focused around a lead producer. The production process behind the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition – which brought together external curators, academics and scientists – was an example of how the Producer Model would work at FACT. From FACT's perspective the Producer Model is an opportunity to bring new ideas and approaches into the organisation and to allow a larger group of people to be involved in programming. However, FACT's move towards the Producer Model is also part of a wider strategy for achieving greater organisational efficiency, as indicated by the Business Plan (Section 2.3), since working with curators and specialists on freelance basis is also a cost saving measure.

### FACT as new (media) institution

Study of FACT's operations indicates that FACT's institutional format shares similarities with both new media institutions and the models of institutional practice proposed by the 'new institutionalism'. As with the 'new institutions' (as discussed in Section 1.1.1.), FACT places strong emphasis – through the long-standing work of Collaborations department – on facilitating socially engaged practices and responding to its local context. FACT has supported various curatorial approaches including context-responsive and durational, and initiated a range of projects (*Waiting Room* commissions, *Tenantspin*, *Veterans in Practice*) – allowing them to develop through different timeframes and locations – in order to embed its practice in the city and build a sustained relationship with its local communities. FACT has been equally interested in programming exhibitions in the gallery as in curating and delivering projects across the city and the region. Projects produced through *Healthy Spaces* and the Abandon Normal Devices festival extend FACT's operations beyond the limitations

of the building. Like the 'new institutions' – which try to adopt the working methods of artists – FACT also experiments with more flexible and varied use of its spaces, often bringing together production and presentation, participation and reception, adapting the gallery to accommodate new functions (as exemplified by the *Climate for Change* exhibition). FACT has also been interested in expanding the notion of the gallery to being one in which it is predominantly a public space; a space for discussion and debate. Exhibitions such as *Climate for Change* and *Turning FACT Inside Out* provide good examples of FACT's attempts to operate as part gallery, part laboratory and part community centre.

FACT's institutional model also shares many characteristics of new media centres. As with most media arts institutions (discussed in Section 1.1.2.) FACT is inherently a hybrid space, bringing together different functions and presentation platforms, including gallery and festival, as well as production facilities and a technology lab. FACT has at its core a commitment to the process of experimentation and has facilitated cross-sector, multidisciplinary collaborations between artists, researchers, scientists, technicians, designers as well as traditional art partners (galleries, curators etc.), as exemplified by the production process behind the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition. FACT also shares with new media centres a strong emphasis on audience participation, and upon utilising this participation to test new technologies as tools for creative engagement. Most of the projects by Manifest AR, commissioned for *Turning FACT Inside Out*, required the audience to assume the role of users, activating the work as participants, players and co-creators of the virtual realm.

The two models discussed above (developed within new media institutions and proposed by new institutionalism share certain key characteristics, these being: a hybrid and collaborative approach to programming and delivery (supporting various curatorial models and interdisciplinary collaborations) and flexible use of spaces (combining different functions of labs, artist studios and social spaces with less focus on the traditional gallery presentation). It could be argued that these characteristics are key to building a flexible and responsive institutional format, which can support and accommodate a variety of artistic practices, especially emerging, experimental work and socially engaged art.

Central to developing the flexibility and responsiveness was FACT's commitment to the process of constant experimentation and it is the experimental nature that most projects and exhibitions discussed in the course of the dissertation share. FACT has commissioned and produced many experimental works (e.g. those presented during the *Robots and Avatars* exhibition and Manifest AR commissions for *Turning FACT Inside Out*) and tested new exhibition formats (*Humble Market*, *Climate for Change*). Finally, FACT has also experimented with its own institutional framework and through AND – which provided the template for the Producer Model – it restructured the operational model at the core of the organisation.

## Discussion

The curatorial approaches and models of institutional practice examined at FACT have their advantages and limitations. The discussion part that follows expands further on the research findings and – drawing on critical reflection around art institutions and curating – problematises certain aspects of the models of working it described, while pointing out broader implications that the analysis of the particularities of FACT's practice have for the study of art institutions and cultural management in general.

## Collaboration in curating

As discussed in the literature review (Section 1.2.3.), collaborative curatorial models of working developed predominantly outside traditional institutions in large-scale international exhibitions, festivals and biennials. Given FACT's history and its beginnings as a commissioning agency and festival organiser, the strong tendency towards collaborative practice at FACT could be regarded as a legacy of Moviola's models of operations. Lewis Biggs, the director of Tate Liverpool (1990 – 2000) and later Liverpool Biennial (2000 – 2011), pointed out that Moviola's model of exhibition delivery based on partnerships and community collaboration was a 'radical break' from the traditional strategies of exhibition making, and quite unique, especially in the cultural context of Liverpool, 'characterised in 1989 by fierce competition between different organisations and groups of artists in the sub-region to meager public funds that were available.'<sup>2</sup> Video Positive, as collaborative exhibition, presented in various venues across the city, as Biggs states, became a model for the Liverpool Biennial.<sup>3</sup>

Although collaborative practice at FACT might have its roots in the institution's particular history, research of recent curatorial practice indicate that FACT's case is symptomatic of a broader tendency towards collaborative models of working in contemporary curating and cultural production. Collaborative models of working have influenced institutional curating, as exemplified by integrated models of programming, characteristic for the 'new institutions' (as discussed in Sections 1.1.1. and 1.2.3.). Collaborative process is also at the core of new media art production, which often requires different skill sets and expertise to be brought together and these collaborative modes of production have, in turn, shaped curatorial approaches to new media. FACT's 'MITES Manual,' a practical guide on commissioning, producing and installing new media artwork, clearly asserts that 'putting on an exhibition of new media works is a team effort.'<sup>4</sup>

As noted in the literature review (Section 1.2.3.), motivations behind the move towards collaborative practice include the democratic potential of collective curation (which can bring together different perspectives; geographic, political, aesthetic) as well as the pragmatics of the pooling together of skills and expertise, and the potential for the production of new knowledge. Collective practices also have a strong social, economic and aesthetic dimensions, as associated with political activism, (as tools of political protest) and alternative forms of social organisation and production.<sup>5</sup> However, others draw attention to the contradictory implications of collaboration within the contemporary socio-economic context; 'collective process can be a tool of political protest, but in a neoliberal working terrain it is often paired with networking and efficient team work.'<sup>6</sup>

'In the end there is nothing special or charmed about collective practice. Accountants and architects offices, bands, design studios, scientific laboratories, monasteries and law firms are all collectives that go about their business without romanticizing it or being over-determined by their collective dispositions. Their dispositions rely more on the day-to-day of their practices rather than on permanent declarations of collective intent.'<sup>7</sup>

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2 Biggs, L. 2009. 'FACT: A Liverpool Invention?' In FACT (ed.) 2009. *We Are the Real Time Experiment*. Liverpool: FACT. pp. 14-15.

3 Ibid., p. 15.

4 Redler, H. 2002. 'Making Sense.' In FACT (ed.) 2002. *The Mites Manual*. Liverpool: FACT. p. 13.

5 See O'Neill, P. 2010. 'Beyond the Group Practice.' *Manifesta Journal*. Vol. 8. pp. 37-45.

6 Schlieben, K. 2010. 'The Crux of Polyphonic Language, or the Things as Gathering.' *Manifesta Journal*. Vol. 8. p. 17.

7 Raqs Media Collective, 2010. 'Additions, Subtractions: On Collectives and Collectivities.' *Manifesta Journal*. Vol. 8. p. 11.

Analysis of FACT's curatorial and production models reveal that both aesthetic and conceptual motivations – where collaborative practice is understood as a democratising model of practice and a tool for engagement – as well as the very pragmatic motivations – where it is a means of pooling people, expertise and resources together in order to produce projects in harder economic times – are at work. Rob La Frenais, from the commissioning agency Art Catalyst, points out that for smaller organisations collaboration with a larger 'well-oiled' institution such as FACT enables them to realise their projects in a manner, and to a level, that they could not otherwise achieve. FACT's collaborative approach thus supports smaller organisations in the sector, using its facilities and expertise with regard to producing technologically complex work. In addition to these external collaborations between the institution and its partners, exhibitions often also involve internal collaborations (as exemplified by Research and Development's involvement in *Turning FACT Inside Out*) in which different strands of FACT's programming come together, creating an opportunity for some of the less visible work to be publically disseminated and, in the case of the Collaborations programme, to bring some of the community focus to bear on democratising the curatorial model.

Despite the unquestionable advantages of collaborative curatorial and production models – both in their pragmatic and democratising potentials – curating collaboratively presents various challenges. As exemplified by *Turning FACT Inside Out* the collective work of curators can sometimes lead to a lack of clarity in defining the idea of the exhibition, or of a project. Organisationally, collaborations can also be demanding, as has been discussed previously with regard to *Robots and Avatars* and the *Humble Market* exhibition; collaborations with multiple partners, relying on different sources of funding (sometimes with different conditions and constraints attached), and having different agendas and objectives, complicate the decision making process. Thus, while collective decision-making may be the most democratic process it does not necessarily result in the best, or most interesting, artwork.

### **The context-responsive model and the expediency of culture**

Discussing the context-responsive approach, exemplified by the work of Collaborations at FACT, it is important to consider it in the context of critical debates surrounding socially engaged and community based artistic practices. As noted in the contextual review (Section 1.2.1.), there has been a growing criticism of what is potentially a utilitarian and instrumentalising approach, particularly to community-based art as a kind of 'soft social engineering',<sup>8</sup> that defuses rather than addresses the issues faced by communities and thereby, paradoxically, plays into the hands of policies that it is attempting to resist.<sup>9</sup> Grant Kester argues that community art, often placing emphasis on personal transformation and betterment, implies an inherent inequality between the artists (understood to be 'empowered', creatively, intellectually or otherwise)<sup>10</sup> and the community or individuals involved in the project ('marked as culturally, economically, or socially different' and in need of being 'empowered')<sup>11</sup> and thus, in fact, undermines their agency.<sup>12</sup>

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8 Kwon, *One Place After Another*. p. 153.

9 Kester, G.H. 1995. 'Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art'. *Afterimage*. 22: 6. [PDF]. Online. Available at: <http://grantkester.net/resources/Aesthetic%2BEvangelists.pdf>. Accessed: March 10, 2012. [no pagination].

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

Indeed, this is part of wider debate about the instrumentalising and expedient approach to art and culture, which are often employed to ease social ills, as discussed in the first part of the contextual review (Section 1.1.3.). Arts Council's paper 'Bigger Thinking for Smaller Cities. How Arts and Culture Can Tackle Economic, Social and Democratic Engagement Challenges in Smaller Cities' is a case in point, where art and culture are regarded as a 'cost effective response to economic, social and democratic challenges.'<sup>13</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2, FACT was envisaged from its inception to be part of the city's regeneration and most of the projects of Collaborations and Engagement, including *Tenantspin* and *Veterans in Practice*, are funded through schemes (social housing regeneration scheme, and community well-being programme), designed to tackle economic and social problems of the city. Inevitably, relying on external funding necessitates aligning with funders' agendas, but it also brings a risk of becoming opportunistic in the sense that it is available funding rather than existing needs in the community or the city that determines the choice of focus.

Drawing on Kwon's analysis of different types of communities (discussed in Section 1.2.2.), veterans can be described as 'Sited community', that is one whose identity is clearly defined. Kwon argued that collaboration with 'Sited communities' risks being predictable, as the art project might be pre-defined by the set of issues central to that community, sometimes stereotyping the identity of the community in the process, and leading to superficial collaborations, which fit already established agendas.<sup>14</sup> Functioning as part of health and wellbeing initiative of the city of Liverpool, *Veterans in Practice* is clearly positioned within transformative agenda, looking to assist the veterans in developing skills and building confidence, and help them return to social life. The focus is strongly on personal transformation of the veterans, and it is indeed open to debate whether such focus – as suggested by Kester – is actually detracting attention from wider processes and systemic causes that contribute to the situation of the veterans. *Tenantspin*, especially early on, was also shaped by the ameliorative logic of the regeneration agendas; directed towards the older generation from council houses in disenfranchised areas of the city, the project aimed to involve the residents in discussion around the issues facing the community and in the consultation about the redevelopment process in the hope of rejuvenating the areas and addressing social concerns.

*Tenantspin* and *Veterans in Practice* have probably not avoided many pitfalls of the reformatory impulses of much of community engagement projects described by Kwon and Kester. However, in the case of *Tenantspin*, what seems to be resisting the simple framework of reformatory and utilitarian notion of community art is the duration of the project, which allowed tenantspinners to evolve as a community, art participants as well as producers and to develop a unique and robust model of working with artists. The fact that the project has continued for over 13 years permitted for dynamic experimentation and maturing of the participatory and collaborative methods. Tenants assumed an ownership of the project and, due to the extensive experience of working with artists, became confident collaborators and art producers in their own right. Referring to Kwon's taxonomy of communities, discussed in the contextual review (Section 1.2.2.) tenantspinners from 'Sited community' became 'Invented, on-going community', which outgrown the original project's remit and, to some extent, gained a level of independence from the funding and partner institutions.<sup>15</sup>

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13 Arts Council England, 2012. 'Bigger Thinking for Smaller Cities. How Arts and Culture Can Tackle Economic, Social and Democratic Engagement Challenges in Smaller Cities'. Online. Available at: [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/6751\\_RCE\\_BiggerThinking\\_LR.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/6751_RCE_BiggerThinking_LR.pdf). Accessed: March 10, 2012. p. 3.

14 Kwon, *One Place After Another*. p. 126.

15 Ibid., p. 130.

## Duration: the ethics and aesthetics of time

Duration, it seems, is key, as exemplified by the *Tenantspin* project. However, it is important to ask whether duration and longer project timeframes could be a simple solution to the challenges and complexities of social engagement. In debating the issue, it is helpful to compare two other projects discussed in the thesis – *Veterans in Practice* and Wodiczko's *War Veterans Vehicle* – which shared similar intent but were produced through very different timeframes. Both of those projects involved working with veterans and tackled similar issues; the social exclusion of veterans and their difficulties of returning to civilian life. *Veterans in Practice* is designed as a long-term community engagement project which focuses on the participants and the process of building a stable relationship with the veterans. *War Veterans Vehicle*, although intended to be a therapeutic project, was a public art piece produced in a relatively short period of time. As a powerful intervention into public spaces, Wodiczko's *War Veteran Vehicle* attracted a lot of interest from the press and the public, bringing attention to the situation of veterans and soldiers deployed in current armed conflicts. As attested by some of the project participants, it also had a positive impact on their lives, by giving them opportunity to talk about their experiences and to make their stories public.<sup>16</sup>

Although the process of project development did not follow what could be regarded as the ethics of good collaboration based on durational way of working and sustained relationship with the project participants, it fostered understanding of the problems that veterans are facing and gave voices to those excluded from the public debate. At the same time, as noted previously, it was received within skepticism within Collaboration and Engagement team, who are used to working in community context in a more sustained way. While the examples of Collaborations projects such as *Tenantspin* strongly indicate that durational ways of working are indeed conducive to developing a sustained relationship with communities and social contexts, drawing on the example of *War Veteran Vehicle* it could be argued that duration in itself is not an answer to the challenges of socially engaged art and can not be a simple criterion for judging the value of artistic engagement with the complexities of social realities.

Discussing the durational approach embedded in the Collaborations production model it is important to note that there is often an intrinsic tension between the durational ways of working and the funding framework within which Collaborations operate. Current Collaboration's projects such as *Veterans in Practice* and *Healthy Spaces* rely on public funding streams which rarely guarantee long-terms sustained level of subsidy because the agendas of the government bodies responsible are susceptible to change. Therefore, it is difficult for Collaborations to plan their work on a long-terms basis. The short-term nature of many public-funding streams that Collaborations rely on not only causes problems with developing long-term programme framework but also with maintaining existing projects. *Waiting Rooms* commissions have proved to be temporally somewhat problematic in the sense that the maintenance of the work over a long period of time is expensive and any community collaboration work is difficult to sustain on an ongoing basis, as in the case of Alistair Eilbeck's work *24,14,17*.

The question of how to sustain a technologically complex work over time also relates to the Exhibitions programme, where the 10 week set format for each exhibition often sits at odds with the experimental nature of some of the exhibitions and works. As discussed above, this was particularly

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16 MacNamus, 'Interview with Rob, Participant in War Veteran Vehicle' pp. 213-216.



the case with the works in the *Robots and Avatars* exhibition (*Ada and Compass*) as well as *Fracking Futures* and *TransEurope Slow* in *Turning FACT Inside Out*. Similarly, the issues with sustaining participatory work over the period of an exhibition can be seen with regard to Nina Edge's work *Ten Intentions* (in *Turning FACT Inside Out*), proving that moderating an engaged and sustained discussion through work presented in traditional gallery exhibition context requires significant time and effort, which need to be carefully planned in order to result in a meaningful process.

The *Humble Market* exhibition also revealed the limitations of a traditional exhibition framework in accommodating time-based performative work. Time costs money and the budget of Exhibitions are not designed to pay for anything other than Gallery Assistants and basic maintenance over the period of an exhibition. In case of the *Humble Market*, an attempt was made to overcome the need for paid performers throughout the period of an exhibition by training the Gallery Assistants to perform the work, which for the most part did not render the work as well as professional performers would have done. The different problems relating to the timeframe of an exhibition format, discussed above, indicate that the traditional gallery exhibition, running for 10 to 12 weeks is not the most suitable platform for presenting more radically experimental work, which might be best delivered and presented under temporary circumstances, such as a festival.

In contrast to the Collaborations and the Exhibitions models, the AND festival involves an intense cycle of production which culminates in a hype of activities running for a week every year. As a short-term event, AND does not have the sustainability issues which were so problematic when showing experimental work in the gallery format or with the digital commissions in the health centres.

### **We are the real time experiment: the (always) new media institution**

The various difficulties FACT has experienced presenting its projects, as discussed above, can be considered inevitable consequences of FACT's artistic risk taking. Indeed, examination of FACT's activities during the timeframe of this research project clearly shows that FACT has taken many risks, experimenting with presentation of new artistic formats and new ways of curating shows. The experimental approach within FACT is not surprising; it is embedded in the very concept of the institution, which is designed as a place where the technology, art and the social meet. 'We Are the Real Time Experiment' – declares the title of FACT's anniversary publication.<sup>17</sup>

Experimentalism has been prevalent in the discussion around new media art, and institutions designed for the presentation of new practices have often deployed the notion of experiment to describe the way they operate. Reflecting the experimental nature of a lot of technology-based work, entire institutions are conceived of as 'laboratories'.<sup>18</sup> The notion of experiment has also been a popular trope in contemporary art with many exhibitions designed as 'experiments in meaning making',<sup>19</sup> in which 'various "actants"' (visitors, curators, objects, technologies, institutional and architectural spaces and so forth) are brought into relation with each other with no sure sense of what the result will be.<sup>20</sup>

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17 FACT (ed). 2009. *We Are the Real Time Experiment*. Liverpool: FACT.

18 See Cook, Graham. *Rethinking Curating*. pp. 235-240.

19 Macdonald, S., Basu, P. 2007. 'Introduction: Experiments in Exhibition'. In S. Macdonald, P. Basu (eds). 2007. *Exhibition Experiments*. London: Blackwell Publishing. p. 3.

20 Ibid., p. 2.

Some of the exhibitions discussed in the thesis are good examples of such ‘experiments in meaning making’. The *Humble Market* positioned the audience at the centre of the work and, as such, they became active partakers in the experiment. The *Zee* installation – although so different to the work presented at FACT before, and limiting in terms of the audience numbers, turned out to be one of the most popular works in the recent history of FACT. The work brought a very different notion of an exhibition might be – not as a space of viewing and contemplation, or even more active interaction – but exhibition as an *event* and *immersive experience*. *Climate for Change* was an attempt to open up the gallery space as a forum for discussion and it brought together different makers to think about new ways of organising. It presented itself as a new experiment in opening up the institution where the concept of the gallery as presentation space was replaced with the gallery as – in theory at least – a social space and as a space for discussion and action. *Turning FACT Inside Out* was also an example of exhibition as experiment, in which artists were invited to play with, question and subvert the physical and institutional structure of FACT. However, the parameters of this experiment were perhaps too broadly defined.

As already noted, experimentalism at FACT is not solely to do with the nature of the works presented and the exhibition format but also with the curatorial and institutional frameworks. It could be argued that FACT itself is conceived of as an *experiment in institution making*. Limited in its format – as a gallery space – FACT found ways to expand its operations through initiatives such as AND, which has been a testing ground for FACT, not only for new artistic concepts but also new ways of working. According to Stubbs, AND was a risk that the institution has taken in order to reconfigure and find new ways of working.<sup>21</sup> As Stubbs notes, FACT paid heavily for AND; it invested a lot of core funding, prioritised the festival over and above other aspects of its duties and invested enormous amount of staff time, but he also believes it was worth it.<sup>22</sup> Stubbs adds that AND was not an attempt to go back to what FACT was before the building but rather a way to find a new way forward: ‘if we’re going to continue, we need to do a very different kind of thing to liven it up a bit. This means to become more flexible, experimental, risky, less institutional, perhaps.’<sup>23</sup>

It is significant that FACT has consistently tried to experiment and did not become satisfied with tested formulae. Looking through various exhibition evaluation forms, one can rarely find remarks ‘it was good to have an easy show where everything worked well.’<sup>24</sup> Indeed, it would have been easier for FACT to resort to safer exhibition formats: retrospectives, film and video installations and blockbuster shows (such as *Art of Pop Video*). Instead, FACT has continued to search for new ways of presenting art and engaging the audience, challenging itself in the process. As Rob La Frenais stated, FACT is indeed very unusual as a medium scale national venue in its openness to new and experimental ideas.<sup>25</sup>

However, experimentalism in itself is not a simple formula for institutional and curatorial innovation and, as Macdonald and Basu point out, experiments need to be properly contextualised in order to be useful:

‘Experimentalism is not just a matter of style or novel forms of presentation. Rather, it is a risky process of assembling people and things with the intention of producing differences

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21 Stubbs, M. 2013. Interviewed by the author, October 8. See Appendix 2.1.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 FACT, 2013. ‘Winter Sparks Evaluation Meeting Notes’. Available on FACT drive. [no pagination].

25 La Frenais, Interviewed by the author.

that make a difference. In their production of something new, experiments seek to unsettle accepted knowledge or the status quo. But experiments can go wrong. They may turn out to be not troubling in the ways that were intended, or, indeed, not troubling at all. They may make little difference. Equally, trying to create experimental exhibitions may itself generate troubles – practically, institutionally, and politically. Moreover, experimentalism should not be exempt from critique but – if it is to continue to trouble in meaningful ways – needs to be contextualized, analyzed, and troubled itself.<sup>26</sup>

Some of the risks that FACT took have paid off and some of them have not, however the key problem with FACT's continuous re-invention is that high staff turnover and constantly shifting extra-institutional relationships mean that many of the lessons are not retained. The weakening of the traditional curatorial role within FACT, lack of curatorial input and time for research and reflection – as discussed on the example of curatorial process behind *Turning FACT Inside Out* – also means that the learning is not kept within the organisation and not exchanged or shared with others in the field.

### The Producer Model

The Producer Model, as an operational framework on an institutional level, reveals assumptions as to the curatorial role of FACT. Mike Stubbs argues that the discussion about the Producer Models leads to the basic question about the curatorial role within the institution: 'do you create democratic open space for other people to programme, or bring their things in, or do you have a strong sense of expertise and authorship to drive a particular agenda?'<sup>27</sup> Stubbs argues that the Producer Model is a way to open up the curatorial framework; 'breathing new people and new ideas in, or people who can help realise the ideas that are already there.'<sup>28</sup> He argues that FACT needs 'emerging curators to come through and churn projects because that gives them opportunity and it gives us a fresh opportunity.'<sup>29</sup> Indeed, from the observation and analysis of FACT programming and operations, it is clear that the focus on experimentation and testing new ideas is very strong and runs through the entire organisation in terms of programming as well as institutional structure and ways of working. The need for new approaches, new knowledge and new perspectives, which the Producer Model enables, is therefore justified and grounded in FACT's operational strategies.

However, the Producer Model – which implies creating temporary configurations of people and expertise tailored for specific projects – is strongly project and delivery focused, and it could be argued, does not foster development of longer-term strategies or research. A previous curator at FACT, Omar Kholeif, criticised the Producer Model by pointing to the weakening of the role of curator and the role of art organisations as places for knowledge production and exchange:

'That is the crux of the producer model, which is about, literally, picking something up and producing it. Hitting it against the wall as quickly as possible; as efficiently as possible. Be able to tick your boxes, write your positive feedback reports, send it to your funders. [...] I think sub-contracting research for a group show, is not going to work in the grand scheme of this. I don't think that without genuine curatorial input, that you're going to be able to produce meaningful group shows that are rigorous and curatorially challenging the canon.'<sup>30</sup>

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26 Macdonald, Basu, 'Introduction: Experiments in Exhibition'. p. 17.

27 Stubbs, Interviewed by the author.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Kholeif, O. 2013. Interviewed by the author, July 26. See Appendix 2.2.

The decrease in number of publications, including exhibition catalogues, larger curatorial texts, or even exhibition guides at FACT could serve as a proof that critical reflection is not a high priority on the institutional agenda. A case in point is also the curatorial process behind the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition, which focused strongly on the delivery of the various projects at the expense of critical contextualisation of the exhibition and resulted in a certain lack of clarity with regard to the concept of the exhibition. The lack of time for critical evaluation in the delivery intense and project focused models of working has also been pointed out by the producers of the AND festival.<sup>31</sup> Critical reflection and project evaluation is more often part of the practice of Collaboration and Engagement – however these are often evaluations for internal purposes and for funders and are rarely shared more widely. It also needs to be noted that FACT did not develop a consistent archival strategy, and although FACT's projects are well documented, there is no coherent archive which would be easily accessible and navigable for the public. The move towards the Producer Model will, most likely, further exacerbate FACT's difficulties with evaluating, contextualising and documenting its practices.

### **Towards the entrepreneurial institution**

The Producer Model is also pragmatically motivated by the need to create an efficient and flexible working strategy and a cost effective employment structure. A significant restructuring of FACT's team provides tangible evidence that FACT's move towards new operational structures is also motivated by the financial efficiency it enables. FACT went from having two curators and a Head of Programme working in the institution in 2009 to having no one with a curatorial job title currently. In March 2014, FACT also made redundant some of its Front of House team, covering the working hours lost in the process with volunteers.<sup>32</sup>

The recent redundancies at FACT resulted in a public discussion and critical commentaries in the press,<sup>33</sup> including an open letter to FACT from 'Precarious Workers Brigade', which pointed out the irony of the fact that, while FACT was presenting *Time and Motion. Redefining Working Life* exhibition, which tackled issues of exploitation in contemporary work systems, the organisation itself decided to make redundant some of their own staff.<sup>34</sup> FACT's representatives, in a response to the letter, as well as other articles relating to the redundancies which appeared in the press, pointed out that

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31 Jenks, Interviewed by the author.

32 Overall the redundancies affected 13 Front of House staff, although as FACT point out, many of them were redeployed; 1 person remained in the same post; two took up full time posts as Front of House; three work in different roles in Picturehouse and FACT, and six work on events (on zero hours contracts); one member took voluntary redundancy; one other Front of House staff one remained in the same role. Overall 1,5 full time roles have been lost, equalling 60 working hours. See FACT, 2014. 'FACT's Response to the Precarious Working Brigade'. Online. Available at: <http://www.fact.co.uk/news-articles/2014/04/facts-response-to-the-precarious-workers-brigade.aspx>. Accessed: April 20, 2014.

33 See Docking, N. 2014. 'Liverpool's FACT Branded Unethical After Axing Staff and Replacing Them with Volunteers'. *Liverpool Echo*. March 27. Online. Available at: <http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/liverpools-fact-branded-unethical-after-6886796>. Accessed: April 2, 2014; Liverpool Class Action, 2014. 'Liverpool Arts Centre Makes Workers Redundant, Replaces Them with Unpaid Volunteers'. [blog]. Online. Available at: <http://liverpoolclassaction.wordpress.com/2014/04/10/liverpool-arts-centre-fact-makes-workers-redundant-replaces-them-with-unpaid-volunteers/>. Accessed: April 12, 2014; Robertson, L. 2014. 'What FACT's Staff Restructure Says About Working in the Arts'. *Doublenegative*. Online. Available at: <http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2014/05/what-facts-staff-restructure-says-about-working-in-the-arts/>. Accessed: April 10, 2014.

34 Precarious Workers Brigade, 2014. 'Open Letter to FACT, Liverpool'. [blog]. Online. Available at: <http://precariousworkersbrigade.tumblr.com/post/81277448894/open-letter-to-fact-liverpool>. Accessed: April 10, 2014.

volunteering schemes offer an opportunity for people to gain valuable experience of working in the arts and FACT has been committed to 'talent development'.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, from my observations it is clear that many FACT staff (according to FACT's statistics 40% of current staff)<sup>36</sup> came up through the position of Gallery Assistants, or started as volunteers at FACT. However, the discussion around the redundancies also revealed that many of Gallery Assistants at FACT worked on zero hours contracts, which is an example of the precariousness of working in the arts today.

This situation at FACT is symptomatic of the chronic contingency of employment in the cultural sector. One of the more frequently quoted examples of a critique of the labour relations within art institutions is the protest by the ctr-i collective – formed out of temporary workers of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona (MACBA) – against 'dubious employment practices' of this 'flagship progressive institution',<sup>37</sup> which took place during an event dealing precisely with the issue of precarious labour.<sup>38</sup> Announcing that 'talking about precariousness in the MACBA is like taking a nutrition seminar at Macdonald's', ctr-i pointed out the fact that 'many "progressive" institutions are formally affirming the fight against precarious labour, while on the other hand they continue to maintain high levels of labour insecurity among their workers'.<sup>39</sup>

Flexible economic policies of art institutions, such as those discussed at FACT, and the growing contingency and casualisation of work in the realm of contemporary visual arts, and more broadly creative industries, must be considered within a context of funding cuts across the board and the pressure on art institutions to develop sustainable business models and move towards more entrepreneurial culture, as discussed in the contextual review (Section 1.1.3.). A consultancy report into business models within arts sector, commissioned by the Arts Council around the time when major cuts to its budget were being announced, made recommendation for the Arts Council to be less tolerant of underperforming institutions and more willing to 'pull the plug' on failing 'organisations or projects'.<sup>40</sup>

The report states that art organisations need to improve their business models in terms of income generation, efficiency, staff development and cost saving measures (e.g. outsourcing of jobs or volunteering schemes, outsourcing of payroll and book-keeping functions 'use of freelancers', outsourcing the 'operation of some catering operations').<sup>41</sup> In terms of funding and financial strategies, it suggests increasing fundraising efforts and building financial reserves. It also makes a case for strengthening collaborative practice and teamwork in order in to share knowledge and manage resources more effectively:

'Strong teams are central to modern business practice but the principles are poorly understood and not commonly implemented in visual arts organisations. Processes are designed from scratch without considering whether others might have undertaken similar work before and that their example can be learnt from. Knowledge management is poor, relying on individual recollection and generosity instead of being embedded through culture and

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35 FACT, 'FACT's Response to the Precarious Workers Brigade'.

36 Ibid.

37 Davies, A. 2013. 'Take Me I'm Yours: Neoliberalising the Cultural Institution.' *OnCurating.org*. Issue No 16. p. 13.

38 Ctr-i was born in response to MACBA's event 'El Precariat Social Rebel' (2006) during which ctr-i – formed by temporary workers of MACBA – spoke against the labour conditions in the museum, and later gave up their jobs. See Davies, 'Take Me I'm Yours: Neoliberalising the Cultural Institution.' p. 13.

39 Eric, Z., Vukovic, S. 2013. 'Precarious Labour in the Field of Art.' *OnCurating.org*. Issue No 16. p. 2.

40 Royce, S.J. 2011. 'Business Models in the Visual Art: An Investigation of Organisational Business Models for the Turning Point Network and Arts Council England.' [PDF]. Online. Available at: [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Final\\_business\\_models.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Final_business_models.pdf). Accessed: August 20, 2013. p. 20.

41 Ibid., p. 31.

process; 're-inventing the wheel' is a common pastime. These practices may well make for rewarding jobs for individuals, and offer some compensation for low rates of pay and poor career prospects, but they do represent a waste of resources in financial terms.<sup>42</sup>

One of the recommendations of the report for art institutions building a sustainable business model is developing volunteering or an intern programme. Perhaps somewhat ironically, the report quotes from the Volunteering England and TUC charter, which explicitly states that 'the involvement of volunteers should complement and supplement the work of paid staff and should not be used to displace paid staff or undercut their pay and conditions of service'.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the removal of permanent staff actually reduces the potential for tacit knowledge to be passed down in the institutional culture and increases the potential for the always new collaborations between freelancers, as laid out in the Producer Model, to be reinventing the wheel each time. Indeed, this has been one consistent critique of FACT's working practices: the lack of institutional reflection upon its own processes and, as addressed in detail above, a constantly changing set of (often difficult) intra-institutional collaborations and inter-institutional staff roles that makes it very difficult to learn from past mistakes.<sup>44</sup>

Another aspect of the move towards a more entrepreneurial institution is the development of more commercial marketing strategies. The above quoted report into business models in the arts argues that a strong brand is key to achieving 'attractiveness', which is identified as one of the key characteristics of successful organisation.<sup>45</sup> As pointed out in the analysis of *Turning FACT Inside Out*, the marketing strategy played a decisive role in framing the final narrative about the exhibition and communicating it to the public. The marketing decision to focus particularly on the Fracking Future piece in the run up to the exhibition, lead to a certain hijacking of the exhibition narrative, steering towards an activist reading of the show. It could be argued that the marketing scheme for *Turning FACT Inside Out* was part of a wider strategy of institutional branding, in line with the institutional goal of strengthening FACT brand, as identified by in the current Business Plan (discussed in Section 2.3.).

Inevitably, FACT, like other art institutions in current economic climate, is pressurised to develop and adopt more efficient business model and move towards more entrepreneurial culture. Central to this is developing attractive and strong brand through successful marketing strategies. In addition, operating successful business model requires cost effective employment structures, such as the Producer Model. However, the project-oriented and delivery focused approach, which the Producer model entails, comes with the danger of an institution being too delivery focused and losing sight of its role as knowledge producer, reflecting on its own practices, fostering and contributing to critical discourse on contemporary culture and society. The flexible and cost effective employment structures may also lead to the dissipation of the institutional knowledge while contributing further to the already precarious labour conditions in the arts.

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42 Ibid. p., 19.

43 Ibid. p., 32.

44 See Kholeif, Interviewed by the author.

45 Royce, 'Business Models in the Visual Art' p. 15.

## Reviewing the research questions

### ***How has FACT sought to curate and facilitate art practices it was set up to promote?***

From its inception, FACT – building on the work of Moviola – has been committed to supporting and presenting artistic practices emerging from experiments with new technologies as well as socially engaged work through its Collaborations department. As exemplified by the projects and exhibitions discussed in the course of this thesis, FACT has supported a great variety of artistic formats. It has commissioned, produced and presented works ranging from film and video through highly complex experiments at the intersection of art, design and technology (including biotechnology, robotics, Augmented Reality, locative and tactical media), through socially engaged practices, interactive and immersive installations to hybrid performative events combining exhibition, performance and theatre. With new media moving closer to the mainstream of contemporary art, FACT has broadened its artistic scope and interest to include many aspects of contemporary art such as performance, theatre and work coming out of the tradition of public art. There has been a growing tendency for FACT to stage immersive and experiential work, combining elements of installation, performance and theatre and this has proved to be popular with FACT's audience.

In trying to facilitate and present such a broad range of artistic practices and accommodate the demands of various artistic formats, FACT has diversified its production and presentation models. In order to embed its practice in the city and respond to its local context FACT has supported various curatorial approaches, including context-responsive, durational and collaborative production models in which communities and project participants work with artist-producers team on design and delivery of projects. Through the work of Collaboration and Engagement, FACT has also supported a variety of projects which developed through different timeframes and locations across the city (*Waiting Rooms* commissions, *Tenantspin*), extending its operations beyond the boundaries of its building.

FACT's commitment to facilitate new media and emergent practices is most evident in its constant experimentalism. FACT has not only supported and produced many experimental works (e.g., works presented during *Robots and Avatars* and the Manifest AR commissions for *Turning FACT Inside Out*, to name a few) but also experimented with the exhibition format itself, turning galleries into hybrid spaces combining functions of a lab, artist studio, community space and a gallery (*Climate for Change*) or performative immersive exhibition/events such as the *Humble Market* exhibition. *Turning FACT Inside Out* was proposed as an open invitation for artist to *rethink* FACT, bringing together artists, artworks and audiences in relation with each other to test the workings of FACT as a building, art institution and a public space. AND, as a festival, provided a platform for FACT to experiment with and open up its presentation format and allowed for exhibitions and projects to develop through various locations and multiple events, expanding and connecting FACT to other cities and to the region.

In supporting a wide range of projects and experimenting with different formats of presenting and distributing their work, FACT has proposed to its audiences various roles and modes of engagement, ranging from passive viewers through respondents (e.g. *Capitalism Works for Me! True/False*), activators and users of works (e.g., pedalling on the virtual bike ride of Liverpool in *TransEurope Slow*, or using Augmented Reality technology to leave messages on the sky (*FACT Sky Museum*), through performers (*Humble Market*) to consultants (*Waiting Room* commissions), project participants (*War Veterans Vehicle*) and creative producers in their own right (*Tenantspin*, *Veterans in Practice*).

In order to build a flexible and responsive institution – accommodating the demands of new media and socially engaged practices – FACT has also put to the test its own institutional format and its operational model in a constant process of experimentation and re-invention. In setting up the AND festival, FACT has not only expanded its possibilities to present new artistic formats and test different exhibition models but also restructured its operations and developed new ways of working. AND provided a template for the Producer Model at FACT, which is shifting the curatorial and production framework at the core of the institution.

### ***What kind of curatorial and institutional strategies has FACT developed?***

As discussed in detail in the Research findings section of this Conclusion chapter, FACT has developed a variety of curatorial and production models with the most distinct ones being the context-responsive, durational models developed by Collaboration and Engagement and the collaborative curatorial and production model characteristic to all strands of programming. Context responsive and durational models of working were developed in order to support the socially engaged, community-based, collaborative and participatory artistic practices that Collaborations were commissioning and producing. These approaches entail working in an embedded and cumulative way, focused on a specific context (city, or community) allowing for a sustained relationship to develop between the artists and the particular context as well as for genuinely participatory and collaborative processes to inform the work.

Collaborative models of working – characteristic of all areas of programming at FACT – are both pragmatic and democratising strategies at the core of the organisation. In the context of Exhibitions and the AND festival, collaborations – involving curators and institutions – are a way to open up the curatorial format, bring together ideas, knowledge as well as resources to produce and co-commission projects and events, particularly new and experimental work, which require gathering strong expertise. In the context of Collaboration and Engagement at FACT, the collaborative production – involving artists and project participants – is understood to be a democratising model of participatory practice and a tool for engagement.

FACT's institutional framework – as discussed in detail at the beginning of this chapter – combines crucial elements of operational models developed within new media institutions (defined by a hybrid and experimental approach to programming and presentation, with interdisciplinary collaborations at their core) and those proposed by new institutionalism (with an emphasis on socially engaged practices, responsive curatorial strategies, integrated approach to programming and flexible use of gallery spaces). Those models share key similarities: a collaborative approach to programming and delivery (integrated across departments and interdisciplinary) and a flexible use of spaces (combining different functions of labs, social spaces, artists studio, with less focus on the traditional gallery presentation). Central to FACT's operational strategies and its ability to develop and deliver a hybrid programme is its move towards the Producer Model, which fosters multiple partnerships and project-based collaborations.

### ***How successful were the approaches FACT developed in supporting the practices it was set up to promote?***

In combining flexibility and experimentalism in its programming, production models and presentation formats, FACT has certainly responded to many demands and complexities of new, socially



engaged media practices. While FACT's curatorial and institutional strategies have supported a wide range of innovative, experimental and participatory works, FACT's ways of working have their limitations, as examined in the Discussion part of this chapter.

### Methods and models

The collaborative ways of working manage to bring together substantial resources in terms of ideas, expertise, knowledge and skills. These are particularly important for commissioning and producing new and experimental work and prototyping new technological interfaces, such as the Manifest AR's works in *Turning FACT Inside Out*. Collaborations with various partners are also a good strategy in a tougher economic climate; co-commissioning and combining both economic and knowledge resources. The AND festival, which is a very good example of working with variety of partners, managed to produce a great diversity of works thanks to a combination of resources. This strategy is also beneficial to the wider arts sector as it builds stronger partnerships between institutions and supports smaller organisations. However, as exemplified by the curatorial process behind *Turning FACT Inside Out*, collaborative models of working can sometimes lead to difficulties in establishing a clear authorial voice and defining a focus of a project, which in turn can make it difficult to communicate a coherent vision to the public. Organisationally, collaborations with multiple partners, relying on different sources of funding and having different agendas, can also be demanding and result in difficult negotiations.

In the context of participatory and community based work, collaborative project design, which includes members of community contributing to the decision-making at crucial stages of the project, is conducive to projects being more embedded in the local community, who develop a greater sense of ownership of the work. The context-responsive and durational approach has produced several strong and lasting community collaborations, most notably Tennantspin and now *Veterans in Practice*. However, in the case of Collaborations at FACT, which is dependent on outside funding, there is a danger of becoming too opportunistic and identifying issues which need to be addressed and responded to based on the availability of funding. Relying on outside funding also brings a risk of being closely aligned with the funders' agendas and makes the work of Collaborations susceptible to changes in funding and, thus, paradoxically in terms of the durational model, unable to plan their work on a longer-term basis.

FACT's experimentalism, which has been a consistent strategy in the institutions approach to commissioning and presenting artistic practices as well as its own curatorial and institutional ways of working, has certainly enabled FACT to produce and present many novel and experimental works. FACT's experimentalism provided a fertile environment for new artistic concepts and new models of exhibition practice but also a testing ground for new models of audience engagement and participation. As attested by Rob La Frenais from Art Catalyst, FACT's openness to new ideas is unique and it also provides opportunities also for other organisations in the sector to take artistic risks.<sup>46</sup>

Building on FACT's collaborative practice and experimental approach, the Producer Model – which FACT is moving towards – seems to offer an effective framework for building new partnerships and continuing the process of experimentation while delivering a complex and varied programme. However, there are also certain risks associated with that model of working. The Producer Model, which implies bringing in external curators and specialists while assigning FACT's staff with predominantly

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46 La Frenais, Interviewed by the author.

delivery tasks, can lead to the weakening of the curatorial role within the institution. Not having a more traditional institutional curator who is focused on research and critical analysis as well as evaluation of projects may potentially result in the institution losing sight of its role as a knowledge producer and of the need to document and critically contextualise its own practices. It also reduces the potential for tacit knowledge and learning from FACT's experiments to be passed down in the institutional culture and shared with others. The decline in the number of catalogues produced as well as more substantial curatorial writing and the failure to develop a strong archival strategy means that FACT has been less successful in contributing to the contextualisation and historicisation of artistic practices it has so effectively supported and incubated.

It could be argued that the move towards more entrepreneurial models of operation at FACT will further contribute to this lack of sustained critical engagement and contextualisation. Although the Producer Model offers the potential for critical reflection to be brought in and generated through collaborations with external curators and academics, the project-oriented model of work that the Producer Model entails, suggests that effects would be concentrated and short-lived and rather than wide-ranging and sustained. Contracting in and outsourcing crucial research and expertise, also mean that the knowledge base and skills are not retained at FACT. Additionally, the Producer Model is also a cost effective employment structure at the core of the organisation and the claims for the Producer Model being a democratising vectors; an opportunity for larger group of people to contribute to the programming and creative production at FACT, need to be weighed against the insecure freelance employment model that underpins it. As noted in the Discussion part of this chapter, the freelance and project-based models of work, which many art institutions readily deploy, contributes to exploitative working conditions in the arts.

### The building

Evaluating FACT's institutional model, it is also important to consider the FACT building itself, which frames its operations and is the flagship of the FACT brand. Has the building been a successful platform for FACT's work?

As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.) the opening of the FACT building and the transition from a commissioning agency to a venue based institution had obvious implications for the way in which FACT operated. Inevitably focusing FACT's efforts on programming exhibitions in the gallery spaces created a need for a more structured approach to delivering engagement activities to support the programme. This was at odds with the Collaborations way of working – its bottom-up approach, which placed emphasis on collaborative and participatory project design, not on delivering interpretations for projects already formed within other parts of programming – and resulted in a certain separation between Collaborations and other strands of programming, which is still present today.

The building also turned out to be too defined by its function as a cinema. The cinematic design was an architectural inspiration for the building, but this resulted in the cinema overshadowing the other functions of FACT, including exhibitions. The intention of FACT's designers to not create a sense of stepping into a gallery was perhaps met too well: the gallery spaces are hidden from view, resulting in visitors associating FACT predominantly with the cinema and bar and – as established by audience research – not being aware of FACT's function as a gallery. However, attempts have been made to open up the gallery space, and the reconfigured FACT Connects Space in the foyer, created a more immediate connection between the art on display and the visitors walking into the building.

While there are problems with the building not being representative enough of FACT's operations and there being certain design flaws,<sup>47</sup> it is possible to argue that the building has served FACT well. FACT's gallery spaces have turned out to be very flexible and equipped well for accommodating the complex and varied work that FACT has presented throughout the years. Although the gallery spaces have their limitations – as any space would – none of the examples discussed and studied during the research brought up the design of the gallery space as a major issue.

The building is more of a problem in financial terms. Buildings are expensive to run, which in the current economic climate, is an issue. However, would FACT have survived had it not had the building? Mike Stubbs points out that buildings are also expensive to build. According to Stubbs, the building might have saved the organisation as it is 'substantial' – as an investment, as a platform, as a hub that focuses practice.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, FACT might have struggled to survive without the building, and it is possible that FACT could have shared the fate of other organisations in the region, which closed down during the recent Arts Council funding cuts, including A Foundation in Liverpool and Folly in Lancaster.<sup>49</sup> The case of Folly is particularly meaningful – as Folly was a commissioning agency focused on digital arts – and as such very similar to what FACT would have been without the building. Importantly, FACT is not only a gallery space but also, and perhaps predominantly, a social space – with a cinema, cafe and bar – which FACT's audiences appreciate and have developed a strong connection with, as the audience research clearly indicates.<sup>50</sup> Although the building might not be the most representative of FACT's artistic ambitions, its multifunctionality is what makes it versatile and suggests that FACT building will continue to be relevant and accommodate the changing needs of its audiences.

## Implications of the research findings

The findings of this research project, based on the analysis of FACT's curatorial and institutional models of working, have broader implications for the study of curatorial and institutional practice and go beyond the local context of FACT. Drawing on the findings, several recommendations for curators and institutions, particularly those looking to commission, produce and present new media and socially engaged practices, can be proposed. Due to this research being closely focused on practice, and pragmatic circumstances, which – as many examples of projects discussed in the thesis prove – have most tangible consequences for the work of curators and institutions – the majority of the recommendation originating from this study are of a pragmatic nature and have practical implications for the work of cultural producers and art institutions, FACT included. However, the findings emerging from the examination of FACT's practice also point towards more speculative conclusions, particularly looking to the future of art institutions.

With regard to the work of curators, the analysis in the thesis indicates that the durational and context-responsive curatorial approaches and ways of working can facilitate meaningful models of par-

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47 Stubbs points out the building design flaws such as too few lifts, which are causing problem with audience flow. See Stubbs, Interviewed by the author.

48 Stubbs, M. 2014. In a recorded conversation with the author. May 8.

49 A Foundation closed down in 2011. See A Foundation, 2011. 'A Foundation News.' February 10. [blog]. Online. Available at: <http://afoundations.blogspot.com/2011/02/foundations-news.html>. Accessed: June 15, 2014. Folly closed down in 2012. See BBC News, 2011. 'Lancaster Digital Arts Charity Folly Set to Close.' August 11. Online. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-14492367>. Accessed: June 16, 2014.

50 Wafer, Hadley, 'FACT. Audience Research Report'. pp. 14-15.

ticipatory practice and community engagement although they are not in themselves an answer to the challenges and contradictions of socially engaged art. For curators and creative producers looking to engage with social and cultural contexts, it is important to allow for the element of time in order to develop a sustained relationship with the context, communities, artists and audiences. Longer project timeframes are conducive to a greater sense of ownership of the project by its participants. Working in an embedded and cumulative way, focusing on a particular context and building a network of artists with suitable skills and expertise, ensures the quality of the projects as well as the process. However, durational working requires appropriate funding, which – given the short-term nature of many public-funding schemes, especially in the context of community engagement – may not be easy to secure. Relying entirely on a short term, project-based funding brings a risk of aligning with the funders' agendas at the expense of consistency, independence and critical edge.

One way of bringing resources and expertise together in tougher economic times is to work in a collaborative mode. As findings indicate, collaborative ways of working – between curators and institutions are a good strategy for delivering more complex and expensive projects, while building a network of partners for sharing knowledge and experience. However, collaborations involving different partners often bring different sets of agendas and expectations, sometimes resulting in difficult negotiations, which can be prevented by agreeing – early in the process – on clear project outcomes and expectations as well as budget responsibilities and tasks assignments.

Collaborative production models are also essential for curators and institutions interested in incubating and presenting new media work, especially technologically highly experimental work, which require a variety of skills and expertise to be brought together, especially strong technological know-how. It is also important to remember that when presenting new media within traditional exhibition format, a proper technological assistance needs to be provided for the entire duration of the exhibition, not just in the project development phase, since – as clearly established on the example of FACT – technologically experimental works pose significant sustainability issues. As this research found, the traditional gallery exhibition format is not the most suitable for presenting highly experimental work which can be better presented under temporary circumstances.

With regard to institutional models, the findings indicate that hybrid and collaborative approach to programming and delivery (integrated across departments and interdisciplinary) and flexible use of spaces (combining different functions: of gallery, lab, social space, artists studio) are suitable strategies for supporting a wide range of experimental and socially engaged practices and are key to building a flexible and responsive institutional format going into the future.

Flexibility in the use of spaces (combining different functions, mixing production and presentation) allows for presenting different artistic formats, especially those that are not easily shown and disseminated in the traditional exhibition model: participatory and performative events, interactive and technologically experiment work, which require assistance and in engaging the audience with the work. Flexibility in presentation format is not solely to do with the use of spaces, but also with varying presentation timeframes, which should be tailored according to the needs of particular projects. FACT – although open for experimentation in the use of its spaces – should consider being more flexible with regard to the presentation timeframes and rather than continue with the set format of four exhibitions of equal duration per year, it could try to diversify the lengths of its exhibitions, especially shortening the duration of some of the more experimental shows in order to avoid the sustainability issues, discussed in the course of the dissertation.

Combining different approaches to programming and supporting various curatorial ways of working including those focused on artistic experimentation as well as on particular social context, is not only conducive to developing and delivering a varied programme but might also help in addressing the conflict – that many art institutions face – between their strive for international significance and relevance to the local context. FACT, in its experimental vein and with its highly collaborative model of working, has fostered and has been part of many international teams and networks (e.g. Connecting Cities, ARTSENSE), developing exhibitions and co-commissioning new works of international significance. Through its Collaboration programme, FACT has also commissioned many significant projects, which grew out of consideration of the local context and had impact on the communities involved.

However, the challenge for FACT that still remains is to further integrate those different areas of programming and produce work that – growing out of particularities of the local context – extends beyond it and has broader significance, while bringing international focus to bear on the uniqueness of FACT's location and its responses to it. In order to do that successfully, FACT needs to give more consideration to advanced planning of its activities, taking into account that development and production timeframes for context-responsive work are usually longer and often sit at odds with timeframes of other strands of programming within institution. Integrating different areas of programming requires establishing a strong artistic vision, ascertained through sustained interest and research, which focuses programming, allowing for different areas of programme feed into each other, thus resisting the short-termism of goals associated with predominantly project-based models of working.

Study of FACT also raises questions about the future of art institutions, especially how new technologies might affect the way they operate. Technology is changing the way we produce and participate in culture and future art institutions will need to respond to those changes by offering more active and participatory modes of engagement. For example, as experiments with Augmented Reality technology in *Turning FACT Inside Out* showed, locative media hold a great potential as a participatory creative platform, opening up the digital realm as a space for artistic experimentation and dissemination of creative content. They provide tools for the audience to become active co-creators and co-curators of the digital art and culture. In addition, the digital realm – unlike a physical gallery space – does not require the permission of curators and institutions to present artists' work, making it, at least in theory, an inherently open and democratic space.

This raises the question of whether we actually need physical gallery spaces to present digital art and engage audience with it or will they become obsolete in the future? The study of FACT pointed out to many limitations of the gallery format as a presentation platform for new media work. That fact has also been pointed out by researchers and curators of new media, some of whom argued that new media art will always remain incompatible with traditional art institutions, as discussed in the contextual review (Section 1.1.2.). However, as analysis of audience engagement with works presented in the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition indicate, new media artworks, especially more experimental ones, are not very easily accessible to the general public and often require mediation and interpretation in order for the audience to engage with them. This process of mediation relies on the knowledge and expertise that the institutions have developed and accumulated through their operations. The physical space of a gallery is also a point of access for the audience, a place where the visitors can encounter innovative work, find out about their operations and test them out. It could be argued that without the physical presence of art institutions such as FACT, the audience for innovative digital art would be largely limited to the narrow group of the media art community.

However, looking into the future of the art institution, some of those conceptual reflections and discussions around institutional models may become less important. Findings suggest that economic aspects will play a significant role in defining the future shape of art institutions, which will need to develop strategies towards sustainable business models, including flexible employment structures and project-based models of working. These come with a danger of the institution being too delivery focused and losing sight of its role as a knowledge producer – contributing to critical discourse on contemporary art. The flexible and cost effective employment structure may also lead to a dissipation of the institutional knowledge base while contributing further to the already precarious labour conditions of the arts industry.

FACT's situation is symptomatic of systemic changes that are taking place in the art world and the broader cultural sector in the UK and internationally. On one hand new efficiency models (such as a cost effective employment structure) and standards of assessment (such as Key Performance Indicators) are introduced; on the other institutions are expected to attract wider audiences, contribute to cultural tourism and the regeneration of cities, in line with the expedient notion culture, which is deployed to ease social and economic ills. Indeed, the pressures and expectations that art institutions negotiate make for a difficult context, and the future will inevitably see further restructurings of the art institution, FACT included.

## Concluding remarks and suggestions for further research

Inevitably, this account, which is based on a study of a relatively short and very recent period in FACT's history, is specific to its time and does not benefit from the hindsight that a historical perspective would offer. Additionally, the intense practical involvement in the institution and the double role – of a researcher and co-curator at FACT – that the collaborative aspect of this research project activated, further complicated the possibility of establishing a position of critical distance. Being and insider and outsider at the same time resulted in difficult decisions about which aspects of casual discussions with my colleagues could be revealed and which needed to stay in the institutional corridors. It also raised the question as to whether I had become too familiar with the environment under examination and, as such, whether there are certain assumptions that I have taken on board as a result of being immersed in the culture of the organisation.

Despite the inevitable risks of becoming too close to the subject of study that being immersed in the environment under examination brings, the practical involvement in FACT's operations provided an unprecedented access to the organisation in a crucial period in the institution's history. The time-frame of this study begins with the launch of the AND festival – which was an enormous experiment and a significant risk, artistic and organisational, that FACT undertook – and ends with the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition, which celebrated the 10th anniversary of FACT building and as such was a catalyst for the process of institutional self-reflection. Being involved in both the initial AND festival (as co-curator of *Wodiczko War Veteran Vehicle*) and later for over three years in the making of *Turning FACT Inside Out* meant that I was at the very centre of this institutional experiment and I was able to closely observe the changes that FACT went through as a result.

Indeed, even in this relatively short period of time, which this study focused on, FACT has changed significantly. The iconic project *Tenantspin*, which shaped and co-defined FACT's identity, has come to an end. The AND festival, which was at the very centre of FACT's activities when I came to FACT,

became much more independent and has now formed as a separate entity, just having gained – at the time of writing – its own National Portfolio Organisation status. The structure of FACT went through significant changes as well: the team became much smaller and FACT went from having two curators and a Head of Programme working there at the beginning of my research to having nobody with a curatorial job title. Four years turned out to be a very long time in such dynamically changing environment, so the picture of FACT, emerging from this study, is already part of its history. It is a snapshot of an institution which is in a process of constant change.

The study builds a multi-layered picture of the workings of the art institution and what is involved in the process of cultural production and management. Based on the study of FACT, art institutions emerge as very complex ecologies of artists, creative producers, communities and audiences as well as funders and other stakeholders, whose different expectations institutions need to respond to and negotiate. Institutions also emerge as organisations of contingent practices where a variety of factors such as available funding and associated agendas, pressures of performance indicators, as well as very pragmatic circumstances such as technical feasibility are all significant factors affecting the way institutions operate, structure their programme and communicate it to the public.

The findings of this study have implications for other researchers seeking to examine art institutions and curatorial practice. Revealing the complexity and contingency of institutional operations, this research highlights the importance of looking behind the scenes of art institutions, which need to be studied on case-by-case basis. Following curators and examining the processes of project development and production gives insight into curatorial decisions and the factors that shape them but also reveals complexities and disjunctions of meaning making in cultural production.

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, the examination of curatorial and institutional practice produced within academia often suffers from not being grounded in practice and, on the other hand, discussion emanating from within institutions, driven by curators and CEOs, is often declaratory and affirmative, since publically funded institutions are not interested in conducting critical examination of their own practice. This study therefore provides an example and potential model for future critical interrogation of institutions. However, further research and the development of methodologies and critical vocabulary remains to be done.

A second avenue for further research relates to the future of institutions such as FACT. Given that new technologies are changing the way we participate in culture, it is crucial to investigate both new models of creating culture and how institutions should reflect and adapt to these changes. Although this study offered some speculative views, the future shape of art institutions – especially those dedicated to the presentation of new media practices – remains an open question and presents fertile ground for further research.

The third and final suggestion for future research is the need for further critical examination of the aesthetics as well as the models of working for both artists and curators within socially engaged practices. These practices pose a particular set of problems of an ethical and aesthetic nature, and despite substantial critical attention, the criteria for evaluating socially engaged practices as well as production and curatorial models remain only vaguely defined.





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# Appendix

## Appendix 1 - *Turning FACT Inside Out*

### 1.1. *Nervous Systems*. Project document (draft)



#### PROJECT DOCUMENT:

Nervous Systems [tentative] - Exhibition Spring 2013

Embedded computation, virtual reality, and mobile digital platforms have saturated spaces with dynamic data and transformed our perception of physical environment and the way we interact with it. Physical spaces are becoming hybrid intelligent environments that can gather and process information and are capable of sensing and responding to activities and events within and around them.

As FACT prepares to celebrate the first decade of its building, we are considering the changing dynamics between audience and gallery space. What new economies of experience emerge in the 'augmented gallery' and how can FACT, as a space and a cultural institution, adapt to the changing expectations of its audience.

*Nervous Systems* – named to reference the pioneering interactive piece by David Rockeby (*Very Nervous System*, 1986-1990) – aims to experiment with the new dimensions of the body/space relationship afforded by responsive and augmented environments. Unlike Rockeby's *Very Nervous System*, which evoked *anxiety* of pervasive technology, nearly two decades later we are interested in exploring the *attentiveness* of the embedded systems and the potential for synthetic symbiosis.

The 'nervous systems' in the context of this exhibition belong both to the responsive neural net like qualities of the augmented environments and to the human participants whose emotions are sensed and responded to through a network of biosensors.

The exhibition will bring together artists, architects and scientists who, in a series of installations, interventions and experiments will sense the audience's reactions while questioning the boundaries of the physical envelope of the building in an attempt to create a more attentive, porous space of experience; performative and responsive.

Philip Beesley's stunning immersive installation *Near Living Architecture* [tentative], will create artificial life-like forest, which will respond to the visitors presence with breathing and swallowing motions. Dozen of sensors detecting viewer's presence send impulses into an embedded network of microcontrollers, which echo the movements, throughout the installation, like waves, creating a sense of an embracing, caring and empathic environment.

The attention to viewers sensorium will be taken to a different level with a major new commission by artist collective ManifestAR, who will work with state-of-the-art wearable technology currently being developed by ARtSENSE research group. The technology, which will be capable of detecting the user's attention and emotions, will respond to the visitor's reactions by adapting the content provided. Building on this idea of Adapted Augmented Reality (A2R), ManifestAR will develop a system, which will enable visitors to partake in the creative process by biometrically generating new augments as well as affecting existing artworks.

As augmented reality continues to infiltrate the analogue world, creating hybrid, liminal spaces of experience, ManifestAR will examine what new qualities and possibilities for making and participating in art emerge at the interstice between the virtual and the physical. The work will exist across and beyond the physical boundaries of the building and will invite the viewers to partake in a radical rethinking and appropriation of FACT's architecture, as well as colonization of new spaces with architectures of imagination.

The idea for the exhibition is to create a space of experimentation, a test bed, where art, research and emerging technologies intersect. For the duration of the exhibition one of the gallery spaces will be turned into an experimental environment; part artist studio, part bio-technology lab, part participatory social space, and part performance and exhibition area. The space will provide the opportunity for the audience to engage with research and the creative process and for artists and scientists to gather feedback.

The concept of the exhibition as laboratory, which fosters art and research exchange, strongly resonates with FACT's mission to bring together art, science, creative technology and innovation while facilitating a culture of knowledge exchange and providing the public with access to high-quality research and art. The show will build on FACT's experience in curating and producing research-driven exhibitions such as *Sk-interfaces*, *Robots & Avatars*, which combined cutting edge research into biotechnology and robotics with art, creating landmark shows, publications (e.g. *Sk-interfaces*, *Human Futures*) and events. *Nervous systems* [tentative] exhibition will be the first show at FACT to provide such a unique opportunity for the audience to be directly engaged with experimentation and the creative process.



## 1.2. *Turning FACT Inside Out* - project document



### PROJECT DOCUMENT:

#### **TURNING FACT INSIDE OUT, June 13<sup>th</sup>- August 25<sup>th</sup> 2013**

As FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) prepares to celebrate the first decade of its building as the UK's primary centre for art and new media forms, we are looking back at the last ten years and re-thinking FACT's status as a physical, digital and cultural centre.

We are asking ourselves, and inviting several exciting artists to become involved with, a series of questions; how does FACT *work* inside, outside and online, both as a building and platform. What economies of experience emerge in the gallery augmented by technology and a complex ecology of social (and digital) networks, artworks and projects extending far beyond the physical boundaries of the building? How does FACT connect with Liverpool in shaping and responding to changing social, political and economic conditions in the city and beyond?

Above all, we are thinking about our audiences and users and wonder how FACT can continue to adapt, so that it not only remains relevant and evocative within a constantly shifting economic climate, but also to ensure that we continue to meet the changing expectations of both our existing and potential audiences, as well as creative producers and stakeholders. In the context of the current heightened debate about the role of public institutions, we are also reflecting on perceptions of FACT as public organisation; do audiences trust our sense of purpose as a cultural and social agency and what do we need to remain relevant going forwards?

With this exhibition we are inviting artists and creative producers to turn FACT *IN-SIDE OUT*; to play, examine, respond or subvert the physical envelope of the building and the institutional framework. The artists will work with the material of FACT, understood as physical and social space as well as international platform: a hub where art, people and technology meet.

### 1.3. *Turning FACT Inside Out* Press Release, May 2013.



FACT

PRESS RELEASE

May 2013

## ***Turning FACT Inside Out***

**Art and politics collide at FACT this Summer**

**13 June – 25 August 2013**



This summer at FACT, Liverpool, a selection of provocative international artists tackle some of the most pressing, controversial and literally ground-breaking political issues of today, as *Turning FACT Inside Out* opens on Thursday 13 June.

Exploring aspects of environment, architecture, capitalism and augmented reality, *Turning FACT Inside Out* is an exhibition that will take over the entire building and beyond, including recreating an indoor fracking site complete with earth tremors and flames.

As FACT celebrates the first decade of its building as one of the UK's primary centres for new media art, it has commissioned an artists' take over, featuring bold, new or never before seen in the UK works from emerging and established artists, including HeHe, Nina Edge, Katarzyna Krakowiak, Steve Lambert, Manifest.AR, and Uncoded Collective.

Offering an opportunity to explore and debate the role and possibilities for the cultural institution and arts venue in a post-digital age, *Turning FACT Inside Out* is set to continue FACT's tradition of staging risky and exciting immersive installations such as Kurt Hentschläger's *ZEE* (2011) and Nick Crowe and Ian Rawlinson's indoor fireworks (*At 25 Metres*, 2007).

**HeHe** (pronounced 'hay hay') are turning FACT's main gallery into an industrial landscape in their new piece *Fracking Futures*, a playful and provocative commentary on crises of global economy, threats of environmental catastrophe and struggles of public institutions in times of austerity.

The Prix Ars Electronica award-winners warn the drilling could result in unquantifiable subterranean noise as tectonic plates shift, minor ground tremors are a possibility, and diluted chemicals used during the fracking process will be sprayed into the air...

Meanwhile, American art collective **Manifest.AR** are producing a series of playful augmented reality games to change the landscape of the FACT building and city. Examining the borders of the physical and the virtual, they will use AR to enable visitors to write in the sky, see personal forests growing among the concrete and even delete cars and buildings from the landscape.

Acclaimed Polish artist **Katarzyna Krakowiak** is turning the building into a listening device, eavesdropping on itself and revealing the inner life of the gallery. Following her recent success at the Venice Biennale of Architecture, Krawokiak will also exhibit at the Istanbul Biennale this May.

American artist **Steve Lambert** – known for his *NY Times Special Edition* made with Andy Bichlbaum of The Yes Men, a spoof newspaper that fooled many when it was distributed around New York in 2009 - will bring his work *Capitalism Works for Me! True/ False* to the UK for the first time. The interactive, carnival-style signage will be installed outside FACT on Ropewalks Square and the public will be encouraged to vote 'true' or 'false' in response to the question.

Liverpool-based artist and activist **Nina Edge** is creating a project using the voice recognition system Siri, based around disrupted communication. Best known for her activist work in Liverpool, which has repeatedly made national news, Edge will install a nomadic tent within the gallery as part of her ongoing exploration of housing issues.

The project *TranseuropeSlow* by **Uncoded Collective** creates an alternative tourist map of Liverpool, bringing to life hidden corners of the city. Working with the local community to develop an authentic perception of Liverpool that moves beyond its international tourism credentials, the installation will invite audiences to sit on a traditional park bench with bicycle pedals attached and explore visions of the city in a first person video game experience.

Mike Stubbs, director of FACT and co-curator of *Turning FACT Inside Out*, said: "This exhibition is a continuation of our celebrations to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the FACT building. It will be provocative and it will ask some big questions, once again showcasing our commitment to making FACT a safe place for risky conversations."

*Turning FACT Inside Out* will run until August 25.

#### 1.4. Brown, R. Review: Turning FACT Inside Out. *Seven Streets*

### Review: Turning FACT Inside Out

Seven Streets, June 13 2013

Available at: <http://www.sevenstreets.com/review-turning-fact-inside-out/>. Accessed: June 20, 2014.

By [Robin Brown](#) on June 13, 2013



Can it really be ten years since FACT opened? Browsing some of the images in *Sedimentary Timeline*, a kind of physical chronography of the multimedia gallery, reveals some old favourites and a frightening reminder of the swift passage of time.

FACT is indeed ten and marking the occasion is *Turning FACT Inside Out* – an exhibition that pushes the physical and conceptual boundaries of the building, not to mention modern technology. The idea seems apt; where video art, for want of a better term, was the modern medium in 2003, the internet and AR are now pre-eminent. But the most striking elements here challenge the concrete and glass, expanding outwards from the Ropewalks, into the sky and a weird plane of existence that is both real yet intangible.

A fracking drill burrows into the building's foundations, augmented reality takes artworks outside and onto Liverpool's streets, virtual bike rides allow us to teleport from Liverpool to Rotterdam and Madrid via pedals and a bench. Gallery 2 throbs with the heartbeat of the building – the daily hubbub of the behind-the-scenes spaces – and opens up the windows to Wood Street for the first time. Blinking and staring, viewers resemble Jim Carrey discovering the world beyond his previous perceptual boundaries in *The Truman Show*: seeing this forever dark and slightly claustrophobic space opened up to the cobbles and cars is oddly discombobulating. Considering this amounts to opening a window it's both genius and blindingly obvious.



The decision to open up some previously fenced-off spaces has paid dividends. FACT now seems more open, more inclusive, a more *fun* space full of games and unusual experiences – a living, breathing building – and exhibitions that challenge visitors to respond and participate are more satisfying than the mute passivity of watching a 60-minute video on a small screen from an unforgiving wooden bench.

If FACT has had a problem over the last ten years, it's been bound up in this awkward medium of video installation and the difficulty of attracting the casual audience to frequently high-concept artworks. The gallery has upped its game in recent years with an effort to engage audiences and feature more playful, accessible installations and the galleries seem much busier as a result.

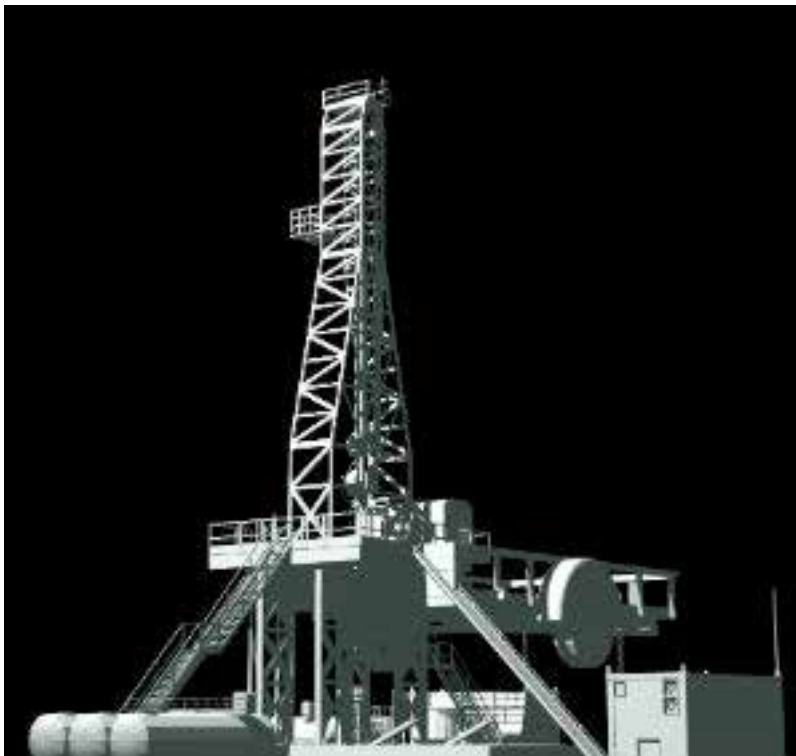
Dumbed down? Arguably, but we're all for it – recent exhibitions such as [Zee](#) and [The Art of Pop](#) (a great use of the form) and [Winter Sparks](#) have seen the gallery hit a rich vein of form. Anyone who suffered the deathly pomposity of Critic's Choice or the misfiring pot-pourri of Nothing Special back in 2005 and 2003 respectively would surely agree that FACT has discovered its place within the city and arts scene. Little has been lost in this gentle transition over the years while much has been gained – it's not uncommon to see children in FACT, pensioners baffling at a rumbling installation or Ropewalks waifs and strays exploring the building in benign bemusement.



None of which is to say that a gallery like FACT should not take risks – “a safe place for risky conversations” is an exciting remit after all. There have been glorious failures and glorious successes – Isaac Julien's *Baltimore* still makes our hairs stand on end – and if any gallery has a licence to make mistakes it's surely FACT. It's oddly fitting, then, that *Turning FACT Inside Out* has greatness and mediocrity alike. Our own interactions with the virtual and digital are at the heart of many exhibits, to varying degrees of satisfaction and success.

Manifest.AR's augmented landscapes – designed to be viewed via a smartphone or tablet – are a nice idea but, after ten minutes of fruitless fiddling with temporary tattoos and QR codes, we gave up. Nina Edge's tent housing a voice-recognition unit that will translate the soliloquies of visitors is a fascinating concept, but the erection of an awning and arrangement of logs from a recently felled tree seem vague and rather trite. The gym-workout-via-video of *TransEurope Slow: Route 1* is pleasant enough and poses some interesting questions about where this mash-up of technology and physicality might go, while Me\_Me Collective's Sedimentary Timeline seems somewhat bolted-on, though very welcome.

Capitalism – good or bad? If you're inclined to respond in the binary feel free to go and press a button connected to Steve Lambert's Capitalism Works For Me!, one of the most eye-catching, if utterly redundant, pieces ever seen in the gallery. It feels like an empty social media campaign that speaks of 'starting a conversation'. Whatever, we liked the typefaces.



Katarzyna Krakowiak's reverberating Chute in Gallery 2 and HeHe's *Fracking Futures* in Gallery 1 provide the most enjoyable elements that stimulate the senses, if little else. The latter's oil derrick burrows into the ground, grumbling, smoking and occasionally puffing the odd fireball into the air – it offers no comment but, without one, it essentially amounts to an amusement park experience; your children will love it and you probably will too. Both works are reminiscent of something that might be seen in a science museum but they don't seem out of place in this exhibition that isn't strictly within FACT, but *is* FACT.

Finally, FACT is experimenting with a new signage system. While not obviously particularly interesting, the way that the new Tilo system has been designed is actually a great representation of what FACT is, where it's going and what this exhibition is telling us. It was raining outside while we were there – Tilo conveyed this with a famed precipitation-themed quote from a popular film. And offered a QR code by which we could play gaming classic Pong. We tried and, again, failed.

But it was a nice idea.

[Turning FACT Inside Out](#)

FACT

Until 15 September



## 1.5. Nunes, S. 'Art in Liverpool meets FACT Curators Aneta Krzemien'. *Art in Liverpool*

### Art in Liverpool meets FACT Curator Aneta Krzemien

September 3, 2013. *Art in Liverpool*

Available at: <http://www.artinliverpool.com/?p=44728>. Accessed: June 20, 2014.

Posted by [vail](#) on September 3, 2013 at 21:17

*Sinead Nunes, Art in Liverpool Editor, meets curator Aneta Krzemien to talk about FACT's current exhibition **Turning FACT Inside Out**, which celebrates the 10th anniversary of FACT as a gallery.*

#### **What originally attracted you to work (on this exhibition) with FACT? (Have you worked with FACT before?)**

I worked on the *Turning FACT Inside Out* exhibition – alongside Mike Stubbs, FACT CEO – as part of a collaborative doctoral research project between the Centre for Architecture and Visual Arts (CAVA) at the University of Liverpool and FACT. CAVA and FACT secured AHRC funding for three PhD students to work across both institutions researching the role of digital media in art, culture and society and the role of FACT in the development of media art in the UK and internationally. My research looks at how has FACT presented and curated the artistic practices it was set up to promote. Working on the exhibition was – for me – also a research process; during which I took part and observed curatorial practice at FACT, finding out more about different approaches, considerations, practicalities and complexities involved in the curatorial and institutional practice.

I had also worked with FACT before this, co-curating the War Veteran Vehicle project by Krzysztof Wodiczko which was shown at the AND Festival in September 2009.

#### **There is a lot of display space in FACT, both gallery walls and the public realm: was this a blessing or a huge task in planning the exhibition? (Thinking here about Manifest.AR and Chute)**

I suppose every gallery or exhibition space presents a challenge, it has its own potential as well as limitations. FACT has great gallery spaces, very flexible and well equipped to present more experimental, technologically complex work. The amount of space wasn't really an issue, or a challenge, as much as the complexity of work and the number of new commissions. All the works, with one exception (that is the *Capitalism Works for Me* piece by Steve Lambert) – were newly commissioned for this exhibition, many of them quite experimental, such as some of the ManifestAR projects, for example *Biomer Skelter* by Tamiko Thiel and Will Pappenheimer, which combined augmented reality technology with biosensing. *Fracking Futures* by HeHe and Katarzyna Krakowiak's *Chute* were large, complex installations, which posed many challenges in the production stage.





Katarzyna Krakowiak's Chute

**It is interesting that the exhibition is so political – what makes politics so entwined with FACT's usual topics of technology and science?**

Technology and science have always had significant social and political ramifications and technological innovation has often been driven by politics, the economy or the needs of warfare. To use an example from the exhibition; the development of hydraulic fracturing technology, releasing shale gas from bedrock, all of a sudden presented this possibility to significantly alter global power structures, which are closely tied to energy resources. It is claimed that some countries that have heavily relied on fuel import, could not only become independent of foreign energy – and often related complications of difficult political alliances – but even become energy exporters. This is why fracking is so appealing to many governments. The issue of fracking is part of a larger debate, where headlines of current political economy converge including those of fuel dependency in relation to global power structures, economic crisis, and threats of environmental catastrophes. It's a good example of how politics and technology are often intertwined.

**Was politics an important element for audience participation?**

We didn't plan to make a 'political' show, but we tried to make a relevant show. With *Turning FACT Inside Out* celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building, we asked the artists what FACT, as an arts organisation, needed in order to remain relevant going forward? Artists' duo HeHe responded by saying that it needed to remain a public space; a space for discussion where urgent issues, such as fracking, can be debated. Similarly Steve Lambert's piece *Capitalism Works for Me True/False* and Nina Edge's *Ten Intentions* pose questions and encourage discussion of a variety of topics. Of course, politics is deeply implicated in the idea of gallery as a valid public forum, and inextricably linked with art, that engages with social and political reality but I don't think politics per se makes audiences participate; It's about how artists present those issues and open up those questions, without trying to prescribe answers or predefine meaning of works; that there are perhaps many levels and contexts in which a work can be considered. *Fracking Futures* is not only engaging because it is 'political' or 'topical' but also because it's open to different readings; there's an element of humour and irony in staging fracking in a gallery on its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a way of generating income. It is also a commentary on the situation of art institutions in times of austerity and funding cuts.

**How do you think FACT has changed over its 10 year history?**

I think FACT used to occupy a unique position, being the first purpose built gallery for presentation of new media in the UK and one of the first organisations dedicated to the incubation and promotion of new media art internationally. It managed to develop unique resources and technical expertise for supporting technologically complex work, which was significant for development of new media practices in the UK at that time. FACT's commitment to working with communities in

a collaborative way, combined with technological experimentation resulted in many interesting works and new models of working. The context has changed. With technology becoming cheaper and more available and new media moving into the mainstream, FACT's position has also changed from occupying its new media 'niche' to being part of wider contemporary art context. However, the core values of FACT, since its inception; the commitment to supporting new artistic practices and meaningful social engagement, are still very much at the heart of the organisation.



*Fracking Futures*

**Now to ask one of the questions the exhibition itself raises: What do you think of the role of the arts venue in today's society, and do people expect more from art galleries? Is the future digital?**

It's a really big question, and a very important one. There are many expectations on art institutions nowadays; to drive research on art and produce new knowledge, present exhibitions, build collections, provide alternative education, all of this while trying to reach wider audiences, whom the institutions are trying to engage in their activities in a meaningful and accessible way. Research, presentation, education and archiving are all very important roles of art institutions, but they are predominantly public institutions, and they need to remain relevant public spaces, places for debate – which is what artists in *Turning FACT Inside Out* are saying. Easier said than done, I suppose. Being relevant, alternative public arenas, where a sustained and meaningful debate can take place – is probably the biggest challenge institutions are facing. Digital media are redefining how institutions work and how we experience and engage with art; collections are now accessible online; many artworks exist both in a gallery space as well as online, so the gallery is just one point of access; the digital public sphere is an important platform for institutions to occupy and activate. Digital technologies also provide artists with many new possibilities for making and presenting work; ManifestAR don't need the permission of art institutions and curators to show their work – their first exhibition took place at the MOMA – as an uninvited augmented reality intervention. But I don't think the future is digital in a sense that brick and mortar spaces of art institutions will become obsolete. I think there will always be the need for those physical public spaces, where one can experience an exhibition, watch a movie, attend a lecture, take part in a conversation or simply hang out in a place where one knows there's always something interesting on offer.

**In Uncoded Collective's *Trans Europe Slow: Route 1* Liverpool is linked to other European cities – are these inter-city links important for the survival of the art gallery?**

Absolutely, *Trans Europe Slow* was commissioned as part of Connecting Cities project, which brought together many major European cultural organisations, which together form a network, and provide infrastructure for commissioning and presenting new projects on urban media screens. Collaborations across organisations on national and international levels are very important as they enable institutions to co-commission and co-fund new projects (which they might have not

been able to do on their own) share expertise, as well as provide artists with networked platforms to present their work. The gallery is becoming a node in this networked ecology of art venues, communities of practitioners and audiences. Building and supporting those networks, which is what FACT has been doing all along, is critical for the survival of the art gallery.

**Were you involved with any of the commissions, and if so did you enjoy the process?**

Yes, I was involved in the commissioning of the works, and yes, it was really enjoyable. Being involved in the process of making artwork, from its inception as an idea through the research and development stages to the final work in the gallery, is really fascinating. The commissioning process involved many people; the artists, curatorial, production and technical teams, everyone bringing their own expertise, skills and unique perspective, which is also what makes it such an exciting process to be a part of. Commissions for *Turning FACT Inside Out* also involved cultural and community partners; The *Fracking Futures* piece by HeHe was commissioned in collaboration with Art Catalyst; a really interesting commissioning agency working at the crossroads of art, science and technology; some of ManifestAR projects were developed in collaboration with scientists from the School of Natural Sciences and Psychology at LJMU. *TransEurope Slow*, was made with the participation of members of the North Liverpool Cycle Club and was co-ordinated by FACT's Collaborations team.

**How do you feel about the controversy caused by HeHe's *Fracking Futures*? Did you expect this response?**

I don't think *Fracking Future* is controversial in itself, as an artwork. The artists' intention was not to take a stand, for or against fracking, but to encourage discussion and – in the context of the exhibition – point towards FACT as a place where this kind of debate can happen and where it should be encouraged and facilitated. Of course we knew that the issue of fracking is controversial, especially in the region where fracking tests were already underway, so we did expect people to have strong opinions about it. That's why FACT invited BBC Radio Merseyside to host a debate about fracking, which was broadcasted from FACT on the opening day.



**I noticed that Me\_Me's work was interested in time: was this a key theme when planning the exhibition?**

Not really, the idea wasn't to look into the past too much, to do a show that would be a showcase of the 'best of FACT'. Rather the focus was on the future, and how does FACT, building on its legacy, continue to be a relevant place over the next 10 years. Having said that, it was important for *Turning FACT Inside Out* as an anniversary show to reference the 10 years of the building, hence the idea to put the call out to artists to design the timeline.

**And lastly, what did you say to the robot in Nina Edge's *Ten Intentions* (2013)?**

I have had brief exchanges with Siri thus far, mainly during the set up period, but I have followed and contributed to the discussions on the *Ten Intentions* web site.

*Turning FACT Inside Out continues at FACT until 15 September*

## Appendix 2. Interviews

### 2.1. Interview with Mike Stubbs

**Aneta Krzemien Barkley Interview with Mike Stubbs, October 8th, 2013, FACT (excerpt).**

A.K.B: Thank you so much for your time. Let's start by talking about FACT's mission. How do you define FACT's mission and sense of purpose, and also what is your artistic vision for FACT?

M.S: I guess FACT's mission is always in a slightly evolutionary process. This is normally determined by us reinstating our position both in terms of how we engage with artists, but also how we perennially, rather triennially, are asked to make our Arts Council submission. We're in that process at the moment, and in actual fact I don't think our mission has shifted very much at all in the last three to five years. I think it's pretty much the same.

(...) I'd describe it as (...) to provide opportunities for excellent international art to get made, for enormous numbers of people to come and access it, to grow opportunities for people to become producers and truly engage in arts and culture in new media.

Then also how we take it away and co-produce or tour it to other places, and then dropping down from that there are a whole range of other things around working with young people, so on and so forth.

The second part of the question is really around how it's changed. Again, I don't actually, I don't think the mission has changed that much. I think we remain as a national centre. So I think the mission has stayed fairly consistent, but in terms of how we activate that or make it work, it's easy to have a mission. Anyone can have a mission. But in terms of actually doing it, I think that's changed quite considerably. I think that the approach of the entire organisation under my leadership has shifted in a long way in a five, six year period.

(...) when I arrived here, there was the sensation that whatever we did was fantastic and it didn't matter what people thought. There was also the sensation that new media and media art was still really sexy and that it was special, and that because of that, FACT could- and in a way I'm over-characterising it, but just to make my point that we were different.

(...)

A.K.B: Could you elaborate a little more on the shift, is it the crux of it that FACT used to occupy a niche position, whereas now new media moved more into the mainstream contemporary art and it is not so unique anymore? Maybe I'll let you elaborate on that...

M.S: Something like that. I don't think new media has made that shift into contemporary art and become less of a niche. I think video art has. I think that moving image practice, technology and video have- we've assimilated understandably into most aspects of contemporary art culture.

I think that new media is slightly different and is worth discussing in a slightly different way. Of course, we can't talk about new media without defining the parameters of- well, giving it a definition because again, for a lot of people, new media still means journalism. That was always one of the confusions through the 1990s, that when you refer to 'new media', other people just thought journalism.

Of course, when we talk about new media now, are we actually talking about social networks? But if we describe new media art as actually being a more pre-

cise part of contemporary history, at the moment if you look at the thing that's CRUMB (...)

It's a really fascinating reflection on the early 90s. At the same time as that, there's a critique coming in, it's just a load of old guys talking about what they did in the past. So we've gone through significant changes, in terms of the vibrant scene, necessity for new media art practice from the early 1990s probably through to the mid-2000s where it was really something, through to a position now where people are still fighting their corner of new media art as being a defined practice and worthy of definition.

Whilst at the same time, it's become massively confused with a whole range of other social phenomena.

A.K.B: Yes. What would be your operational definition of new media, or rather the practices that FACT is interested in supporting?

M.S: Ultimately what I'll do is I'll always try and steer a conversation round to what will make an impact and what I believe we should do to make FACT successful. Of course that brings with it some aspects of new media, some aspects of video art, other aspects of contemporary art practice, experiments in social engagement, virtuality, hybrids between all forms of cultural engagement.

That's where I'll take you within the conversation. In terms of our current position on new media, I think that there are elements of contemporary new media practice which we continue to highlight, amplify and publish because we still believe that there is excellent practice taking place in that field.

That's almost within the classic definition of new media. Perhaps that's informed by different histories of tactical media, ideology and the belief in democratising media, an interest in gaining access to high technology and what's become a DIY culture. Then of course many aspects of digital technologies, which enabled a degree of interaction to evolve, whether that was with non-media editing, hyper card and interacting programming through to a whole range of new technologies, whether that's cybernetics, human computer interaction and data, and the way that we handle data.

So in a way that's a super potted history of the development of new media, because the well gets referenced within this current re-visitation of new media at the moment, and that was significant moment because this was effectively internet communication. So in the early part of new media practice, internet communication was in itself definitely cultural, definitely radical and possibly artistic. But of course there were some artists that started to use that environment as art, but it was also just within a movement in itself significant.

A.K.B: Ok, thank you, we got slightly distracted with the definition of new media, perhaps let's go back to the question of how FACT has changed?

M.S: This shift, okay. (...) Clearly from being (...) coming from a modernist tradition like ZKM and like Ars Electronica and ICC, of making a centre. Even though FACT never described it, you know, if you talked to Eddie (Berg, A.K.B) he would say he never wanted FACT to be a centre. It was never meant to be a centre.

But in actual fact it is a centre, because it was built as a bloody great capital project and it had- for the business model to work, it had to involve a lot of people. So it had to be some kind of centre.

But even in the way when you hear Eddie talk about that, of course it was natural that the idea of being decentred was also a principle that existed early on in it's birth. That would have existed both for Gerfred and Peter or Ukiko, all the people who are behind the other centres.

I think that there is a tension beginning in the birth of these centres which is be-

tween a kind of utopianism, ideologically driven for all the correct reasons. I think that they still stand up. I think that they're massively significant and important, and if anything, more so. Whilst at the time, in terms of strategies of regeneration, the availability of funding within an economic moment and system, was somehow necessitated or both enabled by need around community engagement and capital programmes of centres.

So, a more involved piece of work could start to (unpick) those histories, and you would start to see at what point those ebbs and flows of ideology, the initial mission, going back to your starting question, have had to shift and flow, and also where they've appeared most relevant. Where are the strongest moments of relevance to the future direction of society, or the most relevance in terms of driving contemporary practice and research?

A.K.B: So if you were to summarise, how FACT is different now from than when it started, when it opened the building?

M.S: Yes. Well obviously the building is older. The concept is less shiny, so it's had to reinvent its relevance so that- and at the same time as that of course, it's become more known, so more people visit it and more people know about it and want to come. So it's become known. It's more known than it was.

Again, this is our most traditional design process cycle. That's what happens. So if something doesn't die, it has to reinvent itself. That's just a piece of management theory or just general good advice on life.

So in terms of how its process of regeneration has been- has ranged from developing new products, so it's had to devise new products. I think that in terms of the artistic policy, the artistic policy has become more sensitive to both needs of producers and audiences, and has looked at novel ways of bringing those together. I'm talking very generally, and of course we can think of examples to fill that in maybe later.

Then I suppose we've had to reinstate both international and local relevance. That's obviously a big balancing act. I think we've done it. I think a key within that of course is the way that- going back to, we've actually maintained the commitment of the organisation from its very birth to a collaboration programme.

So you'll know from your research that when Moviola was only just in the Blue-coat, in 1988, 99, 90, it very early on in its lifespan was running engagement programmes and doing peripatetic work around the city, Louis for sure, and Rebecca Owen being two key figures in that.

So in a sense I think when I got here, I think the engagement programme had somehow become slightly compartmentalised. The problem of when you've been doing something really good for a really long time is that you then leave it alone, because it's something you don't need to worry about.

Obviously with a complex organisation, or running an organisation of a particular scale, so for more than fifteen staff, just the management process needed to cycle through various aspects of the organisation means that attention flows in and out as well, internally.

A.K.B: Thinking about the Collaboration and Engagement strand, could it also be the case that because of the building, perhaps the energy had to focus on exhibitions? And because collaborations were doing projects outside, in the city, often in public spaces and in partnership with other institutions, it wasn't so visible? It's almost like the building slightly pushed it aside?

M.S: I agree with you, and of course if we look at the history of the building, we look at the history of the building and the history of the organisation that lead up to its point, effectively it's a completely new organisation. So we're ten years old today, ten years old this year.

Moviola basically have got some great people who are really committed, but have got no experience of building projects. So within the regeneration aspect and the capital programme, people were brought in; consultants, then you needed a completely different staff model in terms of operating a public service effectively, open 363 days a year, whatever it is.

That's a significant commitment. So in terms of stepping from an organisation that started as one or two people in the back of the Bluecoat, through to an organisation at its peak had ten people in two offices in the Bluecoat, to setting up an entire agency that could also manage and run a building. It's an enormous change.

Then of course subsequently to that, there was a disaster with the ceiling falling in. Now that's fortunately very much in the past, but in terms of the impact that that had on the staff, and obviously there were a number of people who were employed here with very specialist skills within the new structure who did deal with it.

But in terms of the overall profile of the organisation, the momentum that had been built up in terms of getting to the point of launching the building, let alone coming to terms with the building which in itself is highly stressful, but then to have a significant failure within the building structure with came with a set of political discussions, financial discussions. That then probably had an enormous impact on both the staff and the perception of the organisation.

But it survived it. It could easily have gone. So I think there maybe, and this is just me idly speculating, it may be that the building then became somehow fetishized. (...)

A.K.B: So do you think in some sense the building became a bit of a problem, that FACT as an organisation had to deal with?

M.S: (...) I think this goes back to that tension between Clive and Eddie not wanting to call it a centre, so it was never called FACT centre. If you called it centre, you'd get your wrist slapped. We're just FACT. But because the scale of the project, and having to be a centre, or just being perceived as a centre by the people even if you don't want to call it a centre, meant of course that the nature of being a fluid ephemeral agency- that would have been another direction.

There are many other agencies that existed in that period who didn't survive, because obviously this is about the substantive. That's a deep and rich subject. But how value is attached, how value is graded, within the material process- and of course, at this particular moment in history, the material value of agency, digitality, experience, knowledge, could be replacing- I don't think it will. But it could be replacing a fifty thousand year old history of building.

That's obviously really challenging to start thinking about, but I think we're in the process of- and clearly the history of FACT has been part of the process of asking those bigger sets of questions which underpin the most authoritative parts of society.

A.K.B: Moving on to the next question, in terms of FACTs main contribution to development of media art in the UK and nationally, what do you consider them to be from your perspective?

M.S: (...) at the highest level, in providing a national platform/ centre for that practice, which meant that it gave it import; in providing a set of resources and facilities for both the production and commissioning and exhibition of significant works over a long period of time, and we're talking about FACT not Moviola, yes?

Then most importantly, in terms of influencing the- in terms of the public's understanding and cognition of there being something called new media or media



art, of being part of the process of evolutionary language and understanding.

Likewise, I would also claim that in terms of a burgeoning knowledge economy, likewise creative industry's economy, that FACT has innovated constantly through a mixture of artworks, experiments, technological interventions to help form both the level of interest and also demonstrate all of the aspects, which are now highly fetishized.

I would also add that we have been a major contribution to an international conversation, and laterally especially. I think that probably until more recently, FACT has actually been quite separate from the international field. That's largely, to an extent, that this is quite interesting.

Obviously within the birth of new media culture through activists and producers, there was an incredibly strong international network. But once the institutions had- this is where further exploration, once the institutions had achieved a degree of success, that the international communication if anything just became less important.

I think that it's only probably in the last four years with the economic crisis, that like the practitioners and the producers and the activists, that the centres are talking to each other again, except from the very beginning. I'd like to think about that a bit further. This is just slightly off the top of my head thought.

(...)

A.K.B: What are the strengths and perhaps limitations of FACT as a presentation and incubation platform for, let's say, new media practices?

M.S: Well some of these are very practical, like physical space. This morning I bumped into some people in the lift who were- they described themselves as the current affairs group. They're senior citizens, they've been meeting here quite regularly in the bar. But they had to leave, because many of them have got hearing dysfunction as elderly people and it was too noisy.

I said, "I'd love you to be able to have your meetings here at FACT. How can we make that happen?" Of course, I'm working under more stringent commercial needs, so I put them in the Box, I've got to charge for the Box. But I'd really like them to be working with us, because clearly ageing society, all our post-human agenda around human futures are really significant.

So how can I keep them? But I don't have any big meeting rooms, which I've got more flexibility on, so more meeting space in the building for the risky conversations in a safer space. That is one of our buy lines.

I guess another limitation is that the- and this is me speaking, in a sense there is a selfishness to the next comment, which is me speaking as a curator. I'd prefer there to be more exhibition space. We're pretty light on exhibition space, and could use bigger exhibition spaces for two different reasons. One is to do bigger and better shows, but also to be able to do commercial shows, which I have done in the past.

I haven't really got a model here where I can put a show together which I could charge entry to, or create a situation where I could charge entry to one show and let people come in free to another, get that balance. So for me, that's a pity. I think in terms of the access to the cinema space for experimental programming and our commercial relationship with City Screen, I think that we're in a relatively good place with that.

There are times in the past that's been problematic. I think that in terms of the physical location of the building, it's perennially demanded attention in positioning FACT as a central driver within the redevelopment of the Ropewalks, which of course is its inception in terms of the redevelopment of the Ropewalks through the European Regional Development Fund investment.

But it is- in terms of the overall health of the area and how known and loved it is, it's in a really great place at the moment. It's buzzing. I still feel that it's still the intention and is a plan for it to become more physically prominent into Bold Street primarily, so that's around visibility.

On the visibility front, we still have to do a lot more in terms of showing the fantastic projects in digital space, press space, etc. So you know, we're in the process of developing a new marketing strategy, crudely speaking.

What other limitations have we got?

A.K.B:

Or we can talk about strengths?

M.S:

Okay, the strengths for the organisations are- clearly it's both got and had amazing staff, and an incredible track record of developing staff. If you look at who's been in the organisation, where they've gone onto. Stay here four or five years, so I think there's something about the work environment which trusts people to take risks and do amazing things which then of course means that people can take that into leadership positions.

So I think as a talent development hub, we're massive in terms of art leadership, curatorial, arts production and artists. Again, if you look at the lists of artists that have come through FACT and where they've gone onto, that churning through emerging practice and then seeing where they've gone onto.

So for instance, Jennifer and Kevin McCoy are international art stars, and I just saw them in the states this summer and they are minted. They did one of their very first commissions here at FACT.

What else are some strengths? Some strengths would be that I think that although, ask the question, what's wrong with FACT building? I would say, "I wish it was a bit like this or a bit like that." The other thing I do have to say is that the project management around the architectural project wasn't strong enough, and the argument to have the iconic beautiful staircase was a poor decision.

Actually what we needed was more and bigger lifts. You can see that when you're trying to get up the stairs, and there's a queue of mothers with striders. It's ridiculous. So how people's vanity sometimes makes bad decisions, that's one of them, let's have that on the record.

I guess, but despite all those things, I still think that as we know really begin to fully explore the ground floor by knocking all the walls down and opening it up and spreading it out into the square, which has been my personal mission, we start to see a fantastic building which is demonstrative of public exchange and porosity and very accessible in terms of feeling that you're welcome, that you can get into the building. Whereas before it obviously used to be that it was more like steel and glass panels.

Other strengths are that we still have just enough funds, we've protected the funds to commission really good work. So we continue to really push the boundaries of the kind of work that we put on.

(...) I think it's international reputation and international linkage is a massive, really significant thing. Then of course in terms of its growing reputation as being a leader of collaborative practice, and we can talk about the projects with more time.

But overall, that of course is one of its major strengths. As we've put more and more attention into bringing that to the fore and making it prescient and visible.

M.S:

But I also just need to add in that again, in terms of how we've built the research programme of which you're part of, that's really becoming the heart of the organisation again, the relationship between collaboration, programming and

research, how those interface is becoming very cohesive again which is excellent, I'm very happy with.

A.K.B: Well let's move to the question of AND. What were the reasons for starting AND? was that an attempt to go back to FACT from pre-building?

M.S: Well I'm sure you know the story, but with my first trip to Liverpool was as an artist to be in *Video Positive*-

And I showed *Desert Island Dread*, 1989 and then met some enthusiasts who believed in video art and were making exhibitions like Bluecoat and the Tate, but obviously the Tate was massively significant in the rise of FACT. The fact that the Tate had happened here meant that FACT could happen here.

So this was about imagination and the possibility of a significant international centre existing outside of London. So of course I was in subsequent *Video Positive* festivals and that was my touch point with the- I had another exhibition at the Bluecoat, separately from *Video Positive*. I was in a show called the North Face 91 between the Tate and Bluecoat.

Then I came back to showing videos in *Video Positive* and came to just be part of it. In that period of course, *Moviola* still existed in the Bluecoat. Then when the centre started, I think it's 2000 was the end of the- you know, they almost switched over and it was like, "It's okay now, we've got a building and we don't need to do a festival." Perhaps, I've never asked Eddie that but we could make that supposition.

We don't need to use other people's spaces because we've got our own, which of course is true. But as we know through innovation theory, that in terms of- it's the struggle which often is the creating moment. So for me to invest really heavily in AND was a combination of personal vanity, of sentiment for the *Video Positive* festival or thinking, "Wouldn't it be great if we had a festival again?", maybe not personal vanity, of opportunism and maybe being insightful as to what we needed to do to bring on board different generations of advocates.

(...)

M.S: I think it's also, again speaking from a management point of view, I think it was also strategically interesting to do it in terms of changing the culture of the organisation. (...) It was important to basically create a challenge.

A.K.B: So was AND a kind of sand box or testing ground, artistically but also in terms of organisational format?

M.S: I think it was basically disruptive. Let's just describe it as that, so that whether as an artist, curator or arts manager, I could be what might have been categorised historically as being disruptive. That would be true, with all the different things I've been involved in, in terms of arts projects.

So it's definitely- I didn't conceive it to be disruptive. I just did it. (...) . But it did, it did disrupt things. It basically meant that people had to think in another way as to what the building was, and also what our relationship was to third parties, artists, other producers.

Again, if you relate that back to the early part of the interview of where people had almost become overprotective of the new shoes as far as I'm concerned. Let's trash the building, let's really use it. It's only a building and it's temporary, like everything.

A.K.B: So how did impact FACT then?

M.S: Well again, going back to the opportunity, of course when I arrived from Australia I had already thought of a festival. Maybe a festival would be good. Then it just

so happened that the cultural Olympiad programme was announced and they were looking for regional bids.

So I was thinking, "Maybe that's a way that I could fund the festival." But it needed to have a regional element to it, it couldn't just be about Liverpool. So I then went to see Dave Mootree, and said, "Maybe we could make a regional bid to do a new festival between us, between Liverpool and Manchester." Then how could we make that have a stronger sense of regionality?

So we then invited Folly to join us, because they were the named digital media regional organisation. They'd also been running their own festival.

M.S:

But I've been to their regional festival. So they had a model of a fledgling festival, which they were trying to do in a slightly peripatetic way. It didn't have that much attraction. It had some, it had some good elements. So I thought, "If they've got that capability, obviously we're really solid and we've got Corner-house up the road with more of a cinema thing."

So it's to work between the partners to do it. So we formed a new company called AND Limited. We then went to the cultural Olympiad and got a load of money to do a four year programme. FACT invested by far the most, and I had a cast. There was a- in terms of the standing start, the standard start at the first festival meant that the organisation invested an enormous amount of staff time.

It invested a lot of core funding. It prioritised the festival over and above other aspects of its duties. So it was a high risk. It nearly cost me personally and it nearly cost the organisation, but it was worth it. But from experience of having set up other festivals, Burning Bush and ROOT, Running Out Of Time, I knew what it would take for it to really, to get attraction instantly, it's so much work, in terms of awareness, audience and product.

But we recovered from a very difficult time after that. The organisation paid heavily for the AND Festival. We overinvested in it, that's what I'll say on the record. I can tell you privately in more detail. Then I suppose, of course in terms of the motivations to do it which we just listed, if you then tested back against that methodology, did it work? Look at the organisation.

It's like it's on fire. Everything is becoming like AND. So it wasn't- I don't think it was wanting to make the organisation like it used to be. It was more a question of, "If we're going to continue, we need to do a very different kind of thing to liven it up a bit."

We probably now need to do something else. We need to keep AND going in some form or other within the culture of the organisation, and hopefully we'll still have the AND Festival itself back on track at some point too.

But in addition to- in terms of AND, if we describe it as, 'AND-ness', like we've achieved AND-ness, yes? We have.

A.K.B:

Which would be what? different organisational ways of working?

M.S:

No, I think it's an approach.

M.S:

I think it's largely about organisational development, that the organisation needed to remember what it was like before it had a building.

A.K.B:

It is also about being quick on its feet?

M.S:

Of course, and responsive and flexible.

M.S:

(...) I think one of the next questions asks about the artistic policy going forward. So to the artistic policy going forward, it continues to cement significant international new commissions within a gallery context. It will continue to do that with its international partnerships, and so on and so forth.

But as you've seen the way that the intuitional programming is going on, across the ground floor and out to the square, that will just get stronger and stronger,

and of course links in a much more fluid way to the research programme, whether that's through academic research, technological research, PhD and academic researching, and all the ideas that other people bring to us that we need to...

And then with collaboration programming becoming more visible, that they'll also too have a stronger power to lift that programme within the space, likewise in digital space. There's still a lot of work to do on that. That needs to make that step change as much as the building itself.

A.K.B: In terms of curatorial strategies, FACT is moving towards the producer model, is that also one of the effects of AND?

M.S: I think the producer model is the effect of two or three things, three things. Clearly AND is part of the producer model, i.e. that you employ people to renew sets of ideas to part of your programme or you work with different agencies.

So remember we also work with Homotopia, DADA fest, so we work with other festivals as well. Maybe the AND Festival is obviously a considerably stronger partnership because it was our inception and I'm part of it, but we also host festivals that we want to be associated with like the Arabic Arts Festival and the Irish Festival.

That's, in a sense, FACT can't become kunsthalle I wouldn't- politically I wouldn't want it to be a kunsthalle. But interestingly in terms of contemporary thinking, there are many advantages. In a sense this really comes down to another curatorial question, in terms of an approach to curatorial, i.e. do you create democratic open space for other people to programme, or bring their things to it, or do you have a strong sense of expertise and authorship to drive a particular agenda?

I think that FACT is between those two things. I think it's somewhere between them. So of course we're trying to define FACT as a platform where other people can use it, digitally and physically, and at the same time as that we're trying to say, "This is what we believe in. These are the sorts of projects that characterise our mission and artistic policy."

In terms of what you're defining as the producer model, this was also lead by the need for new ideas. (...) We'd had curators sitting at their desks going through a very particular process that kind of worked, but not really engaging audience. Well, not thinking about the audience or thinking about new strategies of how to engage co-producers, or thinking beyond new media and media art.

So the producer model meant that we could bring people in on contract, so also about managing financial risk, taking- remember that we lost 11% of our funding three years ago with the Arts Council cuts.

The City Council have taken 5% off us every year. We know going forward that the financial situation will be worse. You can't just suddenly sack people. If you look at the economic model of the organisation, the only costs that you can really change are staff. You can close an extra day and cut your heating, you could cut part of your staff, casual staff bill.

Therefore there was also an economic precedent for us to do things differently. If you look at a really old museum model where you'd have four curators of collection, two contemporary art curators, a moderns curator, these enormous teams. We didn't have that, but we did have- we were quite institutional in our staff structure.

So the producer model was a way of shifting that and departmentally making people realise that they were all part of the programme, whether that's collaboration or research or marketing, a way of bringing them together. Also it's a very effective way of getting new people in and new people out, and we need new people with new ideas, like we need new creative producers, with a balance of course of people who are core, who are developing the mission, the artistic policy, the strength of mind to see that through and work really closely with

other people.

A.K.B: But doesn't it weaken the role of curators in the organisation for the organisation? Working on the basis that you deliver one off project perhaps doesn't allow for a more sustained engagement with the organisation and contribution towards developing new thinking? Would new people be able to contribute towards a longer term programming?

M.S: But are curators the best people for it?

Or we need some new models of curating. If I'm working with Gabby (Jenks, AND Manager A.K.B) she's not a conventional curator.

She's something between audience development worker, curator, programmer.

I'm not interested in the art world as it used to be. There are- clearly if you look at most curators, they're middle class people from privileged backgrounds. They work in organisations set up by privileged people. I'm not interested. So I think we've got a great opportunity to open up a bit. That's not to- obviously I've got a career as a curator myself, I don't want to piss all over my own shoes, to use another shoe metaphor.

Obviously there's a high level of expertise and knowledge needed to be a curator, but then if you refer that to contemporary culture, you're coping to curate it. This is all about exploding the whole myth of the curator. This is not a preserve. Curating has never been a preserve, but if you look historically at where the money used to be in terms of the ownership of material and who looked after it, and who got to do those jobs of looking after it and what their backgrounds were. It's interesting, isn't it?

M.S: (...) So we need some new curatorial models.

M.S: So the producer model of course, is me as the leader of the organisation- I'll just open a window. It's bringing together all of those different needs, like as an arts manager with a set of fiscal needs, as an artistic director wanting to breathe in new people with new ideas who can bring them to us, or just in terms of project curators who can help realise an idea that we've already got.

You need curators at different levels. There's so many different types of curating. Then of course, in terms of the enormous opportunity of new types of vernacular semantic curating.

(...)

A.K.B: Right, okay. so can we talk about FACT's curatorial model going forward?

M.S: Clearly I've become - as a leader of the organisation, I've taken on a stronger curatorial and artistic lead. Because with that new person, I've now got more time to focus on it. That's obviously, that's my highest expertise. So- and obviously Anna, although she's termed Programme Producer, she's got a Masters from Goldsmiths. She's a highly accomplished curator but she's working on a pragmatic basis. It's not academic.

She can curate anything. So can I. So the curatorial force is probably stronger than it's ever been, but we need emerging- this is also about talent development. We need emerging curators to come through and churn through projects because it gives them opportunity and it gives us a fresh opportunity, so all our shows don't end up looking the same which they used to when I got here. It's like this one, after this one, after this one, after this one.

I'd describe that as a museum model from a hundred years ago.

AK: Okay, so if you could just summarise, how do you think the curatorial lead is going to work?

M.S: Okay. I think the artistic curatorial model is (...) that it knits together societal research questions, big ideas, what's relevant; whether that be cultural identity in

digital space as one example, through to technological enablement for different kinds of communities, through to...

So in terms of a social impact agenda, it's a very key question. Then in terms of how technologies can be explored and experimented with for new types of relationships, whether that's online, in the building or outside the building, and how we start to nuance our relationships more finely. I think that's also a very key central question.

I think that the ability and resource to be able to commission the most important artistic practice is still another one of those really high level necessities. We have to be able to continue to do that, and prove that we still are of international significance; to make work which has, whether it's intellectual, tactile, psychological, but deeply engaging.

These things have to happen. Maybe not all of these things can happen in every part of our programme (...).

But addressing the breadth of audiences that we need to work with; likewise, listening to producers. The best ideas come from artists and producers, not from curators. You talk to an artist, curators are things you want to flick off because they're like vultures and they feed off the artist, a bit like an institution also feeds off an artist.

(...)

It's generally, curators have got jobs. You asked this thing about, like the curatorial model. It's very precarious being an artist, and obviously my own experiences of both being an artist and a curator, at time having to combine them, is also for my position. It's why I'm interested in the new models.

Going back to the artistic policy, I think that if I went through the artistic programme with you in depth, you would see how that maps against the artistic policy.

M.S: So clearly, big society questions, virtuality, commercial identity. In one year you'll see the human futures brand is continuing, going back to 2008, the Skinterfaces, which is one of our most significant programmes of all time. That will be revisited through a research programme and looking at many issues around memory and place.

Similarly with Connecting Cities programme, and also the new Human Futures project, which is another European funded project, which is looking at the notion of the shared city. There are bigger research agendas that form artistic policy over the next three to five years.

(...)

A.K.B: Could just give me examples of projects you thought were most successful projects and why?

M.S: Vets in practice, and Rewire, and the exhibition programme, those four.

A.K.B: What are your criteria of success?

M.S: Impact, visibility, change, from an organisational perspective. If you want me to go down a layer, in terms of which exhibition programmes.

A.K.B: Well, I'm interested in how you define success. Is it artistic quality, is it impact, is it both?

M.S: Sort of a combination of all of those things, and of course in terms of- this is also

in time, what time do you need to do the correct things? If you do the right thing at the wrong time, it's wasted. Who's listening? Who's looking? And we know, in the past we didn't know. We couldn't know between using an obsidian mirror and our intelligence to see whether someone was watching us or not, but now we've got pretty good data.

We need to get much smarter at how we use that. Of course there's also a strong commitment to what we might describe as fucking good art, which is just intuition and knowledge. So the combination of science, digital technologies and intuition give us pretty good steer on what we should be doing, and how we can change it.

In terms of project, *Zee* by Hentschlag, and the installation was amazing, very popular public sculpture, and it was really expensive and we built the business model to be able to fund it. It cost 200K, I didn't have to pay anything, (...)

I think also the Age UK partnership around raising awareness around the eight million people that don't have access to a computer in that country, put that in the mix. *Vets in Practice* which I think is brilliant. Wodiczko's project, I think not just because of the project itself but because it also lead to *Vets in practice* or it energised some interest in this field, that's massively important. So thank you, congratulations.

A.K.B: Okay, that's great-

M.S: HeHe, I think HeHe is of note. I think *Turning FACT Inside Out* was a good show all round. I think that ironically Steve Lambert and HeHe are the ones that stood out, largely because Steve Lambert just worked. People just engaged with it, and you could engage with it just by pressing a button but it made people think so much. I still talk to people on what they're thinking, when they can't press the fucking button.

It asks big questions but it looks really great. I think HeHe was really significant because of it's topicality. You could not have timed better the commissioning of a new work for a subject that was so live, and potentially had an enormous effect. I think it probably did affect the debate. Again, whether that's the subject of another PhD as to whether you could evidence the degree of effect.

But in terms of contributing to a debate as to whether fracking was risky or not, or how risky it was, I think it probably did. It got national and international news coverage.

(...)

In terms of Kasia's [Krakowiak. A.K.B] piece, very beautiful intervention. In terms of formalistic and aesthetic work within a physical space, and as an architectural intervention, it worked beautifully. I'm very happy with it. (...)I just think the exhibition programme is one component of an enormous success.

Then when you break it down into- because I'm coming from a curatorial arts background as the director of the organisation, it's natural that I would overly focus on the exhibition programme. But what I'm acknowledging and the way that I choose to answer the question is that it's a lot more than the art programme in terms of making it survive.

A.K.B: Okay, thank you. The last very quick question, what's the key to running a successful media art organisation?

M.S: Well maybe it applies to any organisation, which is obviously to listen to people, have really good people around you that can help you do what you want to do, know what you want to do and be brave enough to push it through. That's three things, and having enough energy and determination to give it your best shot.

A.K.B: Great, thank you so much for your time.



## 2.2. Interview with Omar Kholeif

### Aneta Krzemien Barkley, Interview with Omar Kholeif, July 26th, 2013 (excerpts).

A.K.B: Well, thank you very much for your time. Could we start by talking about your role at FACT? When were you there? What did your role entail?

O.K: I started in 2009, at the end of summer, 2009, officially, until February 2013. But I continue to work as a freelancer until April 2014 - my contract. I came into the organisation on a curatorial fellowship funded by the Arts Council and the Royal College of Art.

The idea of my programme was that it was looking at integrated ways of education and learning - education and practice, learning and practice and the inter-relationship between educational institutions and the third sector. Having people work more closely together and how particular individuals could gain different kinds of experiences and skill-sets.

So, in some respects, not too dissimilar from the collaborative doctoral award that you are doing. Except the difference was, I had to be at FACT four days a week for two years.

Then, it's worth mentioning as well, that my role was funded for a scholarship scheme that was about helping people from poorer social-economic backgrounds and those who are in a black ethnic minority background to get a foot into the arts. Or those who couldn't afford to pay for an MA education.

So the idea was that you worked four days a week and that helped pay for your MA. There was a very particular set of neo liberal politics tied to the grant that I got that helped pay for my salary.

Then, within a year and a half of being in that role, I got to take on the role of curator. Because Karen Newman had left us; she had been made redundant. Then Heather had left, so I got asked to stand up, even though I was getting paid an annual bursary of £12,000 a year. I stepped into the role of curator. Then I got offered the four days a week contract to be curator on a permanent contract after my two-year fellowship finished and became the curator of FACT.

I guess, until now, I would argue that I still am the curator at FACT because I am still a person that Mike speaks to, the sounding board on ideas, on artists etc:

But the interesting thing, about the opportunity I was offered at FACT in the first place, was that there was no set criteria to what I was doing. Except that I had to work four days a week at FACT. Then, it started off with me being thrown everything to do. So anything that was in the curatorial team: do it, do it, do it.

Then, I guess, I had to fight to carve out my own niche. So I looked at the areas that I thought were polemical or problematic in the organisation. The first thing that I said was - and because my background was in cinema and artist film - I said "Here you are, professing to be a national centre for supporting artists on video and in new media. But you never ever show artists film in the theatre. The language that these artists are speaking is a theatrical language and a cinematic language. So you have to bring back this film programme and this film culture."

So I started programming art into the cinemas, mostly FACT's BOX. We started off having five people coming to screenings and by the time I left, it was sold-out screenings. Experimental work, German film-makers showing structurally revolutionary film. Rushes of artist work. 50 people I think for a mid size city like Liverpool is a big deal.

But then as soon as I left being in the organisation, four days a week, that was all gone. There is no cinema programme beyond what the picture house cinemas programme. Mainstream art house.

So it's an interesting thing and I really feel that what I did was try and create a periphery or a space to do something, which I felt aligned with the institutional aims.

But as soon as you leave, that goes away with you. I've gone beyond answering the question here but I just feel that that's something that I wanted to say...

A.K.B:

Okay, my next question is about your approach to curating at FACT. In some ways, you've already answered part of it by saying that you tried to identify what it was that FACT was saying, was doing. But what it was missing, really, in terms of the practice.

So you said about the film programme and starting the artists' film programme. What about exhibitions? How would you normally approach working on the exhibition side?

O.K:

Yes. So it's probably worth mentioning that I don't see my curatorial approach at FACT or elsewhere as being strictly tied to exhibitions. I think that's one of the problems and benefits, perhaps, of working at FACT, is that there is no structured approach to curating.

Yes, the approach that I took, that I am interesting in, is how you engage with an audience across a building - so, basically, it's best to start off - so I'm interesting particularly in artists and film-makers who think of the material of media. So cinema, for example, celluloid, space, the cinematic, the venue, the site as a space that needs to be activated by an engagement with an audience or the public. So, in a sense, it's a very pure understanding of relational work, relational aesthetics. In some respects, the work has to be activated by its engagement with the audience.

But I'm not only purely talking about that but also this idea that work is produced collaboratively. Or that it grows and has a degree of context specificity. That's, partly, influenced by my own personal approach to curating which developed very much from a desire to reflect on how artists were working in peripheral, post-colonial contexts, (the study of the post-colonial was the driver that brought me to art in the first place).

So, my beginning -- of interest in cinema and then art was thinking of artists and film-makers who came from Egypt who were trying to have their voices heard on an international platform. So that informed my interest in this field.

So when it comes to, specifically, curating at FACT, I was trying to find a way to bring in my interests and my approach to curating to the organisation. At first, I found it very, very impossible to penetrate the exhibition. The exhibitions, for me, were very much tied to larger socio-political agendas, which I wasn't interested in. For example, the first show that I worked on was Space Invaders, which Heather curated. That was a show that was very much about; "We need to do a video games show because we're a media arts organisation. Tick. We need to engage with young people to show the funders that we're getting what young people want.

Then a show about war and conflict: My War. That was very much about how we talk about conflict in an era of mediated representation. How we talk about conflict in an era when blogging has become one of the - at the time, had been one of the main means of representation of the alternative narrative in conflict.

But for me, I was not necessarily interested in the form of exhibition curating at FACT. And that is very much because the context seems to be tied to hitting particular cultural, or city wide agendas, as opposed to reflecting or responding to changes in artist practice.

One of the main problem here is that the cinemas are sub-contracted to a commercial operator. So there is no coherent narrative that all its activity together unless you shift a part of your programme to meet the agenda of another programme to make it 'look' and 'feel' coherent. I think the way Cornerhouse is run is much more interesting.

You have theatre, film, visual arts all linked together. Where you're commissioning an exhibition across forms. You're also then commissioning a feature film, which will then be exhibited in your galleries and cinemas. Then you're producing a book and a DVD, which will be distributed by your distribution network.

That organic and integrated synergy is not existent in FACT or across its programme. Indeed, it feels like it's very difficult to create a coherent narrative for all of its programme elements. To the point that you constantly feel that you're fight-

ing against different institutional forces to ensure your problem works across the whole organisation.

O.K:

So my approach, then, to how you create an exhibition was; "Okay, how can I transpose things that I'm finding interesting into the programme?"

But I took the pieces of programme I was doing in the more discursive realm; the public programme. So the films, the symposia, the festival culture (tying to different festivals), I took all of those more discursive pieces and I tried to push them into an exhibition. So that would involve proposing particular works for shows, such as *My War and Space Invaders*. But this influence only started to manifest when we did the exhibition for the AND Festival in 2011. Where we brought Ahmed Basiony, the assassinated Egyptian media artist to FACT. Mike took his piece from Venice and put it in to the exhibition programme.

That was the beginning of when I think FACT could have gone a very interesting direction. But that ambition was never realised.

So what happened was that I proposed to Mike that there was an Egyptian artist who had died in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. Who had become glorified because he was a media artist. But also because he was working with technology at a time when technology was being bandied about as this Utopian device in the Egyptian struggle.

I said; "It'll be really interesting to do something with this artist but not to focus on the work that's being shown at Venice Biennial, which was documentation of a performance of his juxtaposed against documentation he'd taken into Tahrir Square before he died."

I said "Why don't we try and engage with him and look at his oeuvre because all it from the open source instruments he was playing with to technological workshops that he was doing. All of the performative works that he was doing about the endurance and the physicality of the body is going to be lost. Because the only narrative people are going to remember is the one that he died in the Square there during the revolution."

Mike got very, very excited about this, naturally. Then we went ahead. In the end, he decides - he thinks the thing to do is take the piece from Venice and put in in the gallery and just says its part of this group show. Or say it's this other show and a group show, whatever.

That could have been a very interesting moment to see how these peripheral political narratives, literally, in this case, the square of Tahrir was being used as a site, an invocation of media, of activism. There could have been a space to create a narrative around this. But there was no real interest to do anything here by the institution. To contextualise and develop it into a programme.

I felt that it was about - even where we could have had an interesting artist doing something; an interesting narrative unfolding about the role of media in a society, what - there was no desire to engage in that. Or perhaps no time and resource. It became just like; "How about we tick a box and say: FACT has done the Egyptian revolution."

A.K.B:

Why do you think there was no more sustained interest in that?

O.K:

Because I think that the curatorial structure at FACT has been dismantled and there is no awareness that exhibitions take time, graft and research to produce meaningfully. Now, it's not true that always that is the case. But I think - and this will come to this idea of curators and their function in an institution. But, at the moment, not every project is anchored by research.

There is real, real - there is a really interesting thing that smaller institutions seem to ignore and that's why museums take three to five years to produce a show? It's for a very pure reason. It's that the curator has collected and produced an original body of research that will manifest in an exhibition and that will work across multiple forms. That will engage the audience in a sustained and meaningful way. That will produce a piece of discourse that will contribute to the canon of art history, curatorial history and exhibition history.

But there does not seem to be an understanding that - there is this kind of reverse elitism or reverse snobbery that; "We don't work like that; we're not a museum. We're much more responsive and we can do things that are much more interesting." That is indeed true; you can take much more risks. However, it does not mean you should not underpin them with a research process, understanding, nuance, bringing in the right people. The mechanism of working now is about how you bring things in and deliver them.

That is the crux of the producer model, which is about, literally, picking something up and producing it. Hitting it against the wall as quickly as possible; as efficiently as possible. Be able to tick your boxes, write your positive feedback reports, send it to your funders.

O.K:

The rhetoric of FACT is that it engages technology, society and people. That socio-political side is definitely something that is a) of interest to media art historians and it's integral to the history of media art. It is integral to the history of Mike Stubbs as a director, as an artist.

However, he himself is the only curatorial figure in the organisation and he does not have the time to unpack the range of complex issues that are inherent within that. Politics is a multi-faceted and complex beast. That when dislocated from its original site and into the art context requires significant unpacking and layering.

To give you an example, that work, for example, in Venice was one of the most popular pieces in the Venice Biennial. Because it was, literally, referencing a political act that was in the public realm. That people wanted to be able to access and talk about. They critiqued and all sorts of things that about it too at Venice, but it was ultimately hugely popular.

However, when that piece was at FACT, it had one of the lowest turnouts for Gallery 2 ever, from my recollection. You can very easily speak to Joan and get all the gallery figures over the years. But I remember being told; "No-one is going to see this work by this obscure Egyptian artist. What can we do to get some people in the door?"

I'm like; "It's ridiculous because what that Egyptian artist is talking about is on the news on a daily basis."

A.K.B:

So was the problem with FACT not framing it correctly, not providing enough context for this? Or perhaps it had to do with the audience and their expectations?

O.K:

No, I think it's about framing, for sure. There is an audience. I honestly think there is an audience, not only in Liverpool but in the North West and in the country that would travel for particular things if things are framed for them appropriately. As I said, when I started, everyone said; "There's not much take up for artists on video. There's not much take up for artists' films to be shown in the theatre."

I'm not joking that I had sell out screenings of artist's film on an almost weekly basis. So that's not true. There is an appetite. But you need to frame it; you need to build an audience, you need to sustain it, you need to talk to them in an educated way over a period of time. Instead of this, purely, stakeholder, banal, didactic, tap your hand on the shoulder, here's another press conference.

When FACT came and tapped onto the revolutionary bandwagon, I don't think that its audience truly believed that what it was doing was sincere. That's why no-one comes to that particular thing. So instead FACT has focused on showing installations that are; "Oh my God" awe inspiring. Experiential is the new word!

With Winter Sparks - it's the crutch of every show I'm seeing. It's the crutch of the Winter Sparks exhibition. It's the crutch of the Inside Out show. There is some big fracking installation; It's all big pieces of installation.

"How do we have an experiential thing like Zee? How do we create an experience?" Nothing will ever be awe inspiring enough.

My response "Well, maybe art isn't purely about being awe-inspiring and direct relationships with an audience. But actually about how you create a nuanced, durational understanding over a set period of time."

For me, there is a real misunderstanding about the role of an exhibition; the role of art. Actually, with something that you're meant to grow and develop a relationship with, there's something that you're meant to take like a roller-coaster ride.

This is the thing, can we package this exhibition or this work like a roller-coaster ride. If not, then, done. Often, the institution; senior management team, will compare themselves to institutions like the Barbican, the Hayward, South Bank and say; "We want a V&A, we want to create exhibitions that are blockbusters. That tie into much larger social, cultural, trend based themes. We can package them like this film or this film release and get an audience in."

While that is fine; it's totally unfeasible. The Hayward Gallery? The Barbican? They, actually, produce these works in a very rigorous manner over a number of years but also astronomic budgets and access to spaces, which FACT does not have.

I think what FACT really needs to do is engage online. It should be pioneering in this field. It hasn't ever been able to engage online with its audience. There have also not been many public realm projects since the project you worked on with Krzysztof. I found that project, actually, very polemical in some ways. But...

AKB: Why did you find it polemical?

OK: What I found about the project polemical, for me, is that it feels cinematic in a way could be construed as exploitative...

...for the soldiers who are involved. (...)

it's very spectacular. But in a sense, it's almost like the private minutia of having to get someone suffering from post-traumatic stress to untangle very personal histories. Very personal trauma. I get particularly emotional about these things because I was living in the Middle East at a time of very - unstable socio-political time where conflict and the idea of someone blowing up a compound was very, very normal in your neighbourhood.

I was visiting my father in 2004 in Saudi when the soldiers of Jerusalem blew up the compound next door to us. I feel, definitely, like I have a personal relationship to conflict that's been with me my entire life. When I see that, I feel like the spectacular - the spectacle made of conflicts, the cinematic - it's like; "Well, why is any more nuanced than the mainstream films that are coming out?"

Like the Hurt Locker or Zero Dark Thirty. Or any of these feature films which are big blockbuster Hollywood films that aim to make money out of these narratives of conflict. Actually, in some ways, it sets a very particular trend for the way FACT goes with its work.

But, from my personal perspective, I feel like that work with those narratives were unnecessary to be projected that way. Also, there was something about the accents for me that really, really got on my nerves. The parochial nature of the Scouse accent, juxtaposed against those projections, juxtaposed - then being recut into these trailers for the AND Festival.

All the trailers for the AND Festival use - actually, for FACT, all the tenth anniversary trailers, the twenty - all this stuff, they cut into a splice footage of the Wodiczko piece.

Then that piece is its context. I feel that it becomes even more - you start the impetus behind why the institution did the project. Not why the artists did the project. But why the institution did the project.

We all know what Wodiczko's work is like. It's all big screen projections of, sometimes, very politically sensitive material. It's about how, when that material interfaces with the public space, how that material can activate something.

In some respects, it's very interesting to me. But the way that project was handled - also, the way it was - it's almost, maybe, more that I'm frustrated about the way that the image of the installation was used afterwards. As a marketing tool by the institution.

A.K.B: ok, let's talk more about curatorial model at FACT. FACT is said to be moving into the Producer Model, working with external curators, who would bring new ideas, knowledge. Earlier you talked about the lack of critical contextualisation, some of FACT's projects not being underpinned by research. Do you think that Producer Model, bringing external curators might help in creating wider context for FACT projects, and programme?

O.K: (...) If they are not engaged themselves in the research then bringing in - subcontracting the research rather than importing it it is not going to manifest across an organisation and penetrate the minds of everyone in it.

It's those people that run your organisation that speak to the audience on a day to day basis. They're not going to be imbued with that knowledge. I don't think it works necessarily.

I think, maybe, what you need is - I don't know. (...) I, honestly, would try and make

it a slick arts centre and run it as four solo shows a year. With one interesting artist that has a research based practice. Literally, you're untangling the research for purposes of making - a supporting the art work being made.

You're collaborating with other instructional learning, other (...) institutional working. I think that is the way. It's the way that's organic and fluid and makes sense and is simple enough to access.

Unpacking and delving into those concerns with the artist. That's originally research. So if you just pick one artist to work with for each show. You make new work with them, you go on that journey with them. You will come to a point where you are creating new research in a way that is more feasible than the producer model. Feasible for the structure of a small institution like FACT because FACT is a small institution in terms of its ability to deliver a public programme.

It's limited by its gallery space. It's also limited by its core budgets as well. So you're never going to be able to curate the ultimate group show on any subject and spend five years researching it and doing publication at this stage. Because you don't have the space to illustrate necessarily or the budget to do so at your core.

You don't have, at FACT, the expertise in development to guarantee that you'll match the shortfall that you don't have. So, for example, with Tate, they have an amazing development team. So if they say; "I don't want to put -" they put a target of £200,000 per show. They will say; "Well, we can guarantee that we're going to get at least £150,000 of that." So you'll work to £150,000.

A.K.B: I'd like to ask about ways of working within AND Festival and the Biennial. How different was that for you as a curator to working within FACT context? Of course, there are still overlaps - but do you think AND and the Biennial offer a more flexible framework, model for curators to work within?

O.K: Yes and no. (...)  
The Biennial was more interesting because of what the Biennial can do, it's not a festival in the conventional sense because it runs over ten weeks. That is a very interesting model. Because what that can do is it can add peaks and crevices and dove tails and it goes up and down and all these things. It's actually too quite marvellous, the biennial.

Because what it can do is bring a huge amount of foot traffic to the institution for an opening. Then because the umbrella of the Biennial brand is international, it can keep an audience going. So when we do the film programme for the Biennial over ten weeks, I think we have to do an artists' film screening every week for ten weeks.

Almost every week, the screenings were sold out because they had dual marketing from the Biennial and FACT. Because the Biennial's a brand people recognise more than FACT and also, it has special gravitas to it. So it kept people going. Then the Biennial would, obviously, host its own massive events and that would bring other things in.

So it's a hybrid festival, where it's speaking to the temporal nature of an exhibition, a cinematic structural durational nature of having to watch a long film that is painful and arduous. All of these things. For this ten week process as well. But it also has the festival buzz to it.

I think AND Festival for an organisation like FACT is not necessarily as useful. Because what it does is it comes in like a tornado for between two to six days. Brings in all these people and then depletes them. Then they don't have the energy to deliver any more. The audience is gone after that. That it's tried to bring together for these things.

Arguably, the audience is not necessarily engaged with the organisation further beyond that. Because you get a lot of people travelling for the AND Festival, actually, in terms of the core audience. It's not - I'm to constrict myself because the thing is the core audience for AND is partly the institution's audience and partly people that they pay, like, press and speakers to come to these things.

A.K.B: So in terms of curating the Biennial exhibition, did Biennial bring a new angle or approach to doing that at FACT?

O.K: Yes, what the Biennial did was it brought structure and rigour.

A.K.B: So how did this collaboration work? Was the Biennial overseeing your work within FACT?

O.K: So the way that way the Biennial work is kind of odd. So we worked to curatorial model that has since been dismantled/changed. (...) the way it happened was, originally, was that we all proposed artists and ideas and we'd divide them up. (...) anytime I brought an artist to the table (...) There was a rigorous group discussion about why they should be included? What they were doing, conceptually, theo-

retically, internationally in terms of their positioning and standing. All those things became a part of the discussion. That was a disciplinary for me.

(...)

A.K.B:

Summarizing our conversation about different curatorial and ways of working, can I ask for your concluding reflections?

O.K

I would hope is that there could be actual recommendations that come out of the thesis. That are not only about how FACT improve as an institution but other institutions.

(...) I think there needs to be something about institutional models. I think one thing that I would say, very definitely, is that the producer model can only work if there is a coherent, high level structure to the way an organisational programme is developed.

I think sub-contracting research for a group show, is not going to work in the grand scheme of this. I don't think that without genuine curatorial input, that you're going to be able to produce meaningful group shows that are rigorous and curatorially challenging the canon.

Although, I think that you can create interesting collaborative projects through the model of single group shows anyway. But I think one way to restructure the organisation is to - for example, bring the whole team together (...)\_

I would say it's like Director, Artistic Director, Chief Curator, Collaborations Curator - yes, call it Collaborations Curator - or two Collaborations Curators, or whatever. Commerce - get an Online Content Curator. That's what I think, it should be medium specific to the point that people know what they're doing.

"Online Content Curator; you have to originate interesting, online collaborative commissions and content from this framework.

It's intangible and I think the organisation - for the producer model to work, it has to be that there are interesting - I think you should shy away from the term curator because you're using a producer model, for a start.

I also want to ask - not ask but think and posit the question about the role of the curator in the institution. Because I think no institution can exist without a curator. I really do believe it. The curator should, in the case of an organisation like FACT, probably be the Artistic Director.

O.K.:

Cornerhouse has the amazing curator model. It is - Cornerhouse pioneered the producer model a decade before FACT. It does it amazingly well. The way it works is Sarah Perks is Artistic Director (...) and she has two programme managers, one for film, one for visual arts. She has a co-ordinator - it's all producers. (...) Each producer has to deliver everything in their specific remit. But every year, they are entitled to one project to where they can be seconded, they can be a curator on. All right?

Then, the curatorial framework for the organisation which includes the five year structural artistic programme and the specific exhibitions are sub-contracted among - are developed, between three visiting curators and the Artistic Director. So Sarah Perks manages Omar Kholeif, Visiting Curator in London; Micheal Connor Visiting Curator in New York and Henriette Huldish Visiting Curator in Berlin.

We meet quarterly to look at the structural nature of the programme and how it can change. We take on specific exhibitions and projects that we develop ourselves. In a sense, a) there is constant (...) invigoration from the outside. People bringing their independent, autonomous research to the institution.

But also people who work in an independent sphere who have a high level network approach to (...) or who understand different institutional models. Bringing in that knowledge and research into the institution. I think that's been really, really useful. Especially, as Cornerhouse goes into its new phase where it becomes a new organisation called the Home.

Which is the merger of Library Theatre and Cornerhouse. I think that's fantastic that that's going to happen. I think that is an amazing model; a really interesting model and a useful model. Perhaps ones that festivals use more often.

(...)

AKB:

Omar, Thank you so much for your time.